SCREEN

INCORPORATING SCREEN EDUCATION

FILM CITY

RACISM, COLONIALISM
AND THE CINEMA

COLONIALISM, RACISM AND REPRESENTATION

AN INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT STAM AND LOUISE SPENCE

[1] Oxford, 1977.

[2] Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

[3] Bantam, 1974.

[4] Hayden, 1974.

[5] Drama, 1972.

[6] Ungar, 1982.

[7] UCLA Publications, 1980.

[8] Seghers, 1974.

[9] *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Winter-Spring 1971, vol 3 no 1.

RACISM AND COLONIALISM in the cinema have been the subject of many books and essays. The stereotyping of black Americans has been explored by Thomas Cripps in *Slow Fade to Black* [1], by Daniel Leab in *From Sambo to Superspade* [2], and by Donald Bogle in *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks* [3]. The pernicious distortion of African history and culture has been denounced by Richard Maynard in *Africa on Film: Myth and Reality*. [4] Ralph Friar and Natasha Friar's *The Only Good Indian* [5] chronicles the imagistic mistreatment dealt out to the Native American. Lester Friedman's *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* [6] documents the process by which most screen Jews have had to sacrifice all ethnic specificity in order to conform to a WASP-dominated assimilationist creed. Allen Woll's *The Latin Image in American Film* [7] focuses on the stereotypical 'bandidos' and 'greasers' common in Hollywood films about Latin America, while Pierre Boulanger's *Le Cinéma Colonial* [8] exposes the caricatural vision of North Africa and the Near East displayed in such films as *Pépé le Moko* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. And Tom Engelhardt's essay 'Ambush at Kamakazi Pass' [9] places screen anti-Asiatic racism within the context of the war in Viet Nam.

Our purpose here is not to review the research or criticise the conclusions of the aforementioned texts. Rather, we would like to sketch out the background of the questions raised in them, offer some preliminary definitions of key terms, and propose the outlines of a methodology in the form of a series of concerns addressable to specific texts and their representations. We would like both to build on and go beyond the

methodologies implicit in existing studies. These studies of filmic colon-
ialism and racism tend to focus on certain dimensions of film – social
portrayal, plot, and character. While such studies have made an inval-
uable contribution by alerting us to the hostile distortion and affection-
ate condescension with which the colonised have been treated in the
cinema, they have often been marred by a certain methodological
naiveté. While posing legitimate questions concerning narrative plaus-
ibility and mimetic accuracy, negative stereotypes and positive images,
the emphasis on realism has often betrayed an exaggerated faith in the
possibilities of verisimilitude in art in general and the cinema in particu-
lar, avoiding the fact that films are inevitably constructs, fabrications,
representations. The privileging of social portrayal, plot and character,
meanwhile, has led to the slighting of the specifically cinematic
dimensions of the films; the analyses might easily have been of novels or
plays rather than films. The insistence on 'positive images', finally,
obscures the fact that 'nice' images might at times be as pernicious as
overtly degrading ones, providing a bourgeois facade for paternalism, a
more pervasive racism.

Although we are quite aware of the crucial importance of the *contex-
tual*, that is, of those questions bearing on the cinematic industry, its
processes of production, distribution and exhibition, those social institu-
tions and production practices which construct colonialism and racism
in the cinema, our emphasis here will be *textual* and *intertextual*.[10] An
anti-colonialist analysis, in our view, must make the same kind of meth-
odological leap effected by feminist criticism when journals like *Screen*
and *Camera Obscura* critically transcended the usefully angry but
methodologically flawed 'image' analyses of such critics as Molly
Haskell and Marjorie Rosen in order to pose questions concerning the
apparatus, the position of the spectator, and the specifically cinematic
codes.[11] Our discussion draws from, and hopefully applies by extension
to, the analysis of other oppressions such as sexism, class subordination
and anti-semitism, to all situations, that is, in which difference is
transformed into 'other'-ness and exploited or penalised by and for
power.

Some Definitions

We should begin, however, with some preliminary definitions. What do
we mean by 'colonialism', 'the Third World' and 'racism'? By colonial-
ism, we refer to the process by which the European powers (including
the United States) reached a position of economic, military, political and
cultural domination in much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This
process, which can be traced at least as far back as the 'voyages of discov-
ery' and which had as its corollary the institution of the slave trade,
reached its apogee between 1900 and the end of World War I (at which
point Europe had colonised roughly 85% of the earth) and began to be

[10] For a discussion of
the contextual
dimension of
racism in the
cinema, see
'Racism in the
Cinema: Proposal
for a
Methodological
Model of
Investigation', by
Louise Spence and
Robert Stam, with
the collaboration
of Pat Keeton,
Charles Musser,
Richard Porton,
Susan Ryan, Ella
Shochat, and Ed
Simmons, to be
published in a
forthcoming issue
of *Critical Arts: A
Journal for Media
Studies.*

[11] See, for example,
Molly Haskell,
*From Reverence to
Rape*, New York,
Holt, Rinehart and
Winston, 1974,
and Marjorie
Rosen, *Popcorn
Venus*, New York,
Avon, 1974.

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[12] These notions of the Third World are imprecise because the Third World nations are not necessarily poor in resources (Mexico, Venezuela and Kuwait are rich in petroleum), nor culturally backward (as witnessed by the brilliance of contemporary Latin American literature), nor non-industrialised (Brazil is highly industrialised) nor non-white (Argentina is predominantly white).

[13] Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1968, p 186.

reversed only with the disintegration of the European colonial empires after World War II.

The definition of the 'Third World' flows logically out of this prior definition of colonialism, for the 'Third World' refers to the historical victims of this process – to the colonised, neo-colonised or de-colonised nations of the world whose economic and political structures have been shaped and deformed within the colonial process. The colonial relation has to do with *structural* domination rather than with crude economic ('the poor'), racial ('the non-white'), cultural ('the backward') or geographical categories.[12]

Racism, finally, although not limited to the colonial situation (anti-semitism being a case in point), has historically been both an ally and a product of the colonisation process. It is hardly accidental that the most obvious victims of racism are those whose identity was forged within the colonial process: blacks in the United States, Asians and West Indians in Great Britain, Arab workers in France, all of whom share an oppressive situation and the status of second-class citizens. We will define racism, borrowing from Albert Memmi, as 'the generalized and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the former's own privilege or aggression'.[13] Memmi's definition has the advantage of calling attention to the *uses* to which racism is put. Just as the logic of sexism leads to rape, so the logic of racism leads to violence and exploitation. Racism, for Memmi, is almost always a rationale for an already existing or contemplated oppression. Without ignoring the accumulated prejudices and cultural attitudes which prepared the way for racism, there is a sense in which it can be argued that racism comes 'in the wake' of concrete oppressions. Amerindians were called 'beasts' and 'cannibals' *because* white Europeans were slaughtering them and expropriating their land; blacks were slandered as 'lazy' *because* the United States had seized half of their territory; and the colonised were ridiculed as lacking in culture and history *because* colonialism, in the name of profit, was destroying the basis of that culture and the memory of that history.

The same Renaissance humanism which gave birth to the code of perspective – subsequently incorporated, as Baudry points out, into the camera itself – also gave birth to the 'rights of man'. Europe constructed its self-image on the backs of its equally constructed Other – the 'savage', the 'cannibal' – much as phallocentrism sees its self-flattering image in the mirror of woman defined as lack. And just as the camera might therefore be said to inscribe certain features of bourgeois humanism, so the cinematic and televisual apparatuses, taken in their most inclusive sense, might be said to inscribe certain features of European colonialism. The magic carpet provided by these apparatuses flies us around the globe and makes us, by virtue of our subject position, its audio-visual masters. It produces us as subjects, transforming us into armchair conquistadores, affirming our sense of power while making the inhabitants of the Third World objects of spectacle for the First World's voyeuristic gaze.

Colonialist representation did not begin with the cinema; it is rooted in a vast colonial intertext, a widely disseminated set of discursive practices. Long before the first racist images appeared on the film screens of Europe and North America, the process of colonialist image-making, and resistance to that process, resonated through Western literature. Colonialist historians, speaking for the 'winners' of history, exalted the colonial enterprise, at bottom little more than a gigantic act of pillage whereby whole continents were bled of their human and material resources, as a philanthropic 'civilising mission' motivated by a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny. Daniel Defoe glorified colonialism in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a novel whose 'hero' becomes wealthy through the slave trade and through Brazilian sugar mills, and whose first thought, upon seeing human footprints after years of solitude, is to 'get (him) a servant'.[14]

Other European writers responded in more complex and ambiguous ways. The French philosopher Montaigne, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, suggested in 'Des Cannibales' that the Amerindian cannibalising of dead enemy warriors paled in horror when compared to the internecine warfare and torture practiced by European Christians in the name of a religion of love. Shakespeare has Caliban in *The Tempest*, whose name forms an anagram of 'cannibal', curse the European Prospero for having robbed him of his island: 'for I am all the subjects that you have/which first was mine own king'. (Aimé Césaire had to alter Shakespeare's character but slightly, in his 1969 version, to turn him into the anti-colonialist militant Caliban X.[15]) And Jonathan Swift, a century later in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) portrays colonialism in satirical images that in some ways anticipate Herzog's *Aguirre*:

A crew of pyrates are driven by a storm they know not whither; at length a Boy discovers Land from the Topmast; they go on shore to rob and plunder; they see an harmless people, are entertained with kindness, they give the country a new name, they take formal possession of it for the king, they set up a rotten plank or a stone for a memorial, they murder two or three dozen of the natives, bring away a couple more by force for a sample, return home and get their Pardon. . . . And this execrable crew of butchers employed in so pious an expedition, is a modern colony sent to convert and civilise an idolatrous and barbarous people.[16]

The struggle over images continues, within literature, into the period of the beginnings of the cinema. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), published but a few years after the first Lumière screenings, describes colonialism in Africa as 'just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale' and emphasises its racist underpinnings. 'The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves,' Conrad has his narrator say, 'is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.'[17]

[14] Bunuel's film version of the novel mocks Defoe's protagonist by haunting him with surrealist dreams, turning him into a transvestite, and making it singularly difficult for him to make rational sense out of the tenets of Christianity to an inquisitive Friday. The film *Man Friday*, which we have not seen, reportedly tells the story from Friday's point of view. And in a recent Brazilian adaptation of the novel, black actor Grande Otelo subverts Defoe's classic by playing a Friday who refuses the coloniser's power to name, repeatedly telling the Englishman: '*Me* Crusoe, *You* Friday!'

[15] See Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête*, Paris, Seuil, 1969.

[16] Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, New York, Random House, 1958, p 241.

[17] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, New York: New American Library, 1950, p 69.

[18] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1968, p 51.

Imperialism and the Cinema

'The settler,' Fanon writes, 'makes history; his life is an epoch, an Odyssey,' while against him 'torpic creatures, wasted by fevers, obsessed by ancestral customs, form an almost inorganic background for the innovating dynamisn of colonial mercantilism.' [18] Since the beginnings of the cinema coincided with the height of European imperialism, it is hardly surprising that European cinema portrayed the colonised in an unflattering light. Indeed, many of the misconceptions concerning Third World peoples derive from the long parade of lazy Mexicans, shifty Arabs, savage Africans and exotic Asiatics that have disgraced our movie screens. Africa was portrayed as a land inhabited by cannibals in the Lubin comedy *Rastus in Zululand* (1910), Mexicans were reduced to 'greasers' in films like *Tony the Greaser* (1911) and *The Greaser's Revenge* (1914), and slavery was idealised, and the slaves degraded, in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Hundreds of Hollywood westerns turned history on its head by making the Native Americans appear to be intruders on what was originally their land, and provided a paradigmatic perspective through which to view the whole of the non-white world.

The slave degraded: *The Birth of a Nation*, directed by DW Griffith, 1915.

The colonialist inheritance helps account for what might be called the tendentiously flawed mimesis of many films dealing with the Third World. The innumerable ethnographic, linguistic and even topographical blunders in Hollywood films are illuminating in this regard. Countless safari films present Africa as the land of 'lions in the jungle' when in

fact only a tiny proportion of the African land mass could be called 'jungle' and when lions do not live in jungle but in grasslands. Hollywood films, in any case, show disproportionate interest in the animal, as opposed to the human life of Africa. And as regards human beings, the Western world has been oddly fascinated by Idi Amin, in many ways an atypical leader in the continent of Nyerere, Mugabe and Machel.

At times the 'flaw' in the mimesis derives not from the *presence* of distorting stereotypes but from the *absence* of representations of an oppressed group. *King of Jazz* (1930), for example, paid tribute to the origins of jazz by pouring (through superimpositon) a series of musical ensembles, representing diverse European ethnic groups, into a gigantic melting pot, completely bypassing both Africa and Afro-Americans. Black Brazilians, similarly, formed a structuring absence within Brazilian cinema during the first few decades of this century, as film-makers exalted the already annihilated and mythically connoted 'Indian warrior' in preference to the more problematically present black, victim of a slavery abolished just ten years before the founding of Brazilian cinema. Many American films in the fifties gave the impression that there were no black people in America. The documentary-like *The Wrong Man* (Hitchcock, 1957), for example, shows the subways and even the prisons of New York City as totally devoid of blacks.

At other times the structuring absence has to do not with the people themselves but with a dimension of that people's history or institutions. A whole realm of Afro-American history, the slave revolts, is rarely depicted in film or is represented (as in the television series *Roots*) as a man, already dead, in a ditch. The revolutionary dimension of the black church, similarly, is ignored in favour of a portrayal which favours charismatic leaders and ecstatic songs and dances.[19] The exclusion of whites from a film, we might add paradoxically, can also be the result of white racism. The all-black Hollywood musicals of the twenties and thirties, like present-day South African films made by whites for black audiences, tend to exclude whites because their mere presence would destroy the elaborate fabric of fantasy constructed by such films.

The absence of the language of the colonised is also symptomatic of colonialist attitudes. The languages spoken by Third World peoples are often reduced to an incomprehensible jumble of background murmurs, while major 'native' characters are consistently obliged to meet the coloniser on the coloniser's linguistic turf (here westerns, with their Indian-pidgin English, again provide the paradigm). Anna, in *The King and I*, teaches the Siamese natives 'civilised' manners along with English. Even *Cuba* (directed by Richard Lester, 1980), a generally sympathetic portrait of the Cuban revolution, perpetuates a kind of linguistic colonialism by having the Cubans speak English in a variety of accents (many of which have nothing hispanic about them beyond an occasional rolled 'r') not only to English-speaking characters, but also to one another. In other films, major nations are mistakenly attributed the wrong language. In *Latin Lovers* (directed by Mervyn Leroy, 1953), for example, Portuguese-speaking Brazilians, when they are not speaking

[19] A recent example of this tendency is the ecstatic song led by James Brown in *The Blues Brothers* (directed by John Landis, 1980).

[20] For a discussion of Hollywood's view of Brazil, see Sérgio Augusto, 'Hollywood Looks at Brazil: From Carmen Miranda to Moonraker', in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*, East Brunswick, Associated University Presses, 1982.

English, are made to speak Spanish.[20]

In response to such distortions, the Third World has attempted to write its own history, take control of its own cinematic image, speak in its own voice. The colonialist wrote the colonised *out* of history, teaching Vietnamese and Senegalese children, for example, that their 'ancestors' were the Gauls. A central impulse animating many Third World films is precisely the effort to reclaim the past. Thus *Ganga Zumba* (directed by Carlos Diegues, 1963) memorialises the proud history of black rebellion in Brazil by focusing on the seventeenth century fugitive slave republic called Palmares. *Emitai* (directed by Ousmane Sembene, 1972) deals with French colonialism and Senegalese resistance during the period of the Second World War. *Chronicle of the Years of Embers* (directed by Lakdar Hamina, 1975) recounts the Algerian revolution and *The Promised Land* (directed by Miguel Littin, 1973) renders homage to the short-lived 'socialist republic' of Marmaduke Grove as a way to examine both the contradictions and the revolutionary potential of the Chile of the Allende period.

The slave rebellious: *Ganga Zumba*, directed by Carlos Diegues, 1963.

Many oppressed groups have used 'progressive realism' to unmask and combat hegemonic images. Women and Third World film-makers have attempted to counterpose the objectifying discourse of patriarchy and colonialism with a vision of themselves and their reality as seen 'from within'. But this laudable intention is not always unproblematic. 'Reality' is not self-evidently given and 'truth' cannot be immediately captured by the camera. We must distinguish, furthermore, between realism as a goal – Brecht's 'laying bare the causal network' – and realism as a style or constellation of strategies aimed at producing an illusionistic 'reality effect'. Realism as a goal is quite compatible with a style which is reflexive and deconstructive, as is eloquently demonstrated by *El Otro Francisco* (directed by Sergio Giral, 1974), a Cuban film which deconstructs a romantic abolitionist novel by highlighting the historical reali-

ties (economic motivations on the part of the whites, armed resistance on the part of the blacks) elided by it, while at the same time underlining its own processes of construction as a filmic text.

Positive Images?

Much of the work on racism in the cinema, like early work on the representation of women, has stressed the issue of the 'positive image'. This reductionism, though not wrong, is inadequate and fraught with methodological dangers. The exact nature of 'positive', first of all, is somewhat relative: black incarnations of patience and gradualism, for example, have always been more pleasing to whites than to blacks. A cinema dominated by positive images, characterised by a bending-over-backwards-not-to-be-racist attitude, might ultimately betray a lack of confidence in the group portrayed, which usually itself has no illusions concerning its own perfection. ('Just because you're black don't make you right,' one black brother tells another in *Ashes and Embers*, directed by Haile Gerima.) A cinema in which all black actors resembled Sidney Poitier might be as serious a cause for alarm as one in which they all resembled Stepin Fetchit.

We should be equally suspicious of a naive integrationism which simply inserts new heroes and heroines, this time drawn from the ranks of the oppressed, into the old functional roles that were themselves oppressive, much as colonialism invited a few assimilated 'natives' to join the club of the 'elite'. A film like *Shaft* (1971) simply substitutes black heroes into the actantial slot normally filled by white ones, in order to flatter the fantasies of a certain (largely male) sector of the black audience. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (directed by Stanley Kramer, 1967), as its title suggests, invites an elite black into the club of the truly human, but always on white terms. Other films, such as *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), *Pressure Point* (1962), or the television series *Mod Squad*, place black characters in the role of law-enforcers. The ideological function of such images is not dissimilar to that pointed out in Barthes' famous analysis of the *Paris Match* cover which shows a black soldier in French uniform, eyes upraised, saluting what we presume to be the French flag. All citizens, regardless of their colour, can serve law and order, and the black soldier's zeal in serving the established law is the best answer to critics, black and white, of that society. The television series *Roots*, finally, exploited positive images in what was ultimately a cooptive version of Afro-American history. The series' subtitle, 'the saga of an American family', reflects an emphasis on the European-style nuclear family (retrospectively projected onto Kunta's life in Africa) in a film which casts blacks as just another immigrant group making its way toward freedom and prosperity in democratic America.

The complementary preoccupation to the search for positive images, the exposure of negative images or stereotypes, entails similar methodological problems. The positing and recognition of these stereotypes has
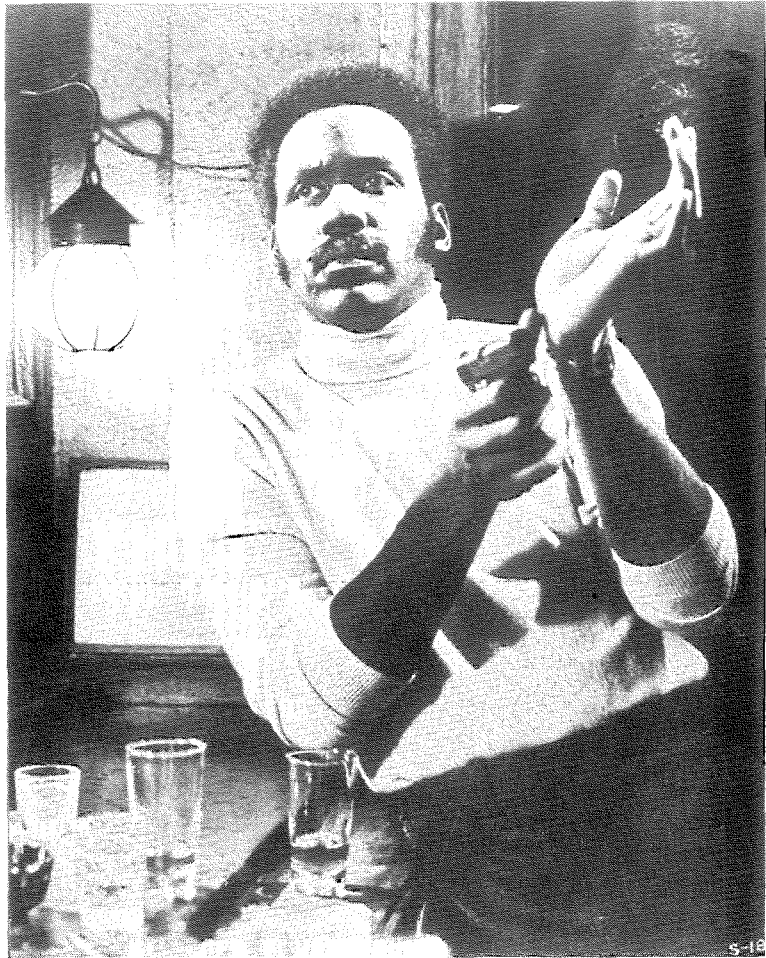
Black hero, white
role: *Shaft*, 1971.

been immensely useful, enabling us to detect structural patterns of
prejudice in what had formerly seemed random phenomena. The exclus-
ive preoccupation with images, however, whether positive or negative,
can lead both to the privileging of characterological concerns (to the
detriment of other important considerations) and also to a kind of essen-
tialism, as the critic reduces a complex diversity of portrayals to a limited
set of reified stereotypes. Behind every black child performer, from
Farina to Gary Coleman, the critic discerns a 'pickaninny', behind every
sexually attractive black actor a 'buck' and behind every attractive black
actress a 'whore'. Such reductionist simplifications run the risk of repro-
ducing the very racism they were initially designed to combat.

The analysis of stereotypes must also take cultural specificity into
account. Many North American black stereotypes are not entirely con-
gruent with those of Brazil, also a multi-ethnic New World society with a

large black population. While there are analogies in the stereotypical images thrown up by the two cultures – the 'mammy' is certainly a close relation to the *'mae preta'* (black Mother), there are disparities as well. Brazilian historian Emilia Viotti da Costa argues, for instance, that the 'sambo' figure never existed, as reality or stereotype, in Brazilian colonial society.[21] The themes of the 'tragic mulatto' and 'passing for white', similarly, find little echo in the Brazilian context. Since the Brazilian racial spectrum is not binary (black *or* white) but nuances its shades across a wide variety of racial descriptive terms, and since Brazil, while in many ways oppressive to blacks, has never been a rigidly *segregated* society, no figure exactly corresponds to the North American 'tragic mulatto', schizophrenically torn between two radically separate social worlds.

An ethnocentric vision rooted in North American cultural patterns can lead, similarly, to the 'racialising', or the introjection of racial themes into, filmic situations which Brazilians themselves would not perceive as racially connoted. *Deus e Diabo na Terra do Sol* (*God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun*, directed by Glauber Rocha, 1964) was mistranslated into English as *Black God, White Devil*, suggesting a racial dichotomy not emphasised either in the original title or in the film itself. The humour of *Macunaíma* (1969), similarly, depends on an awareness of Brazilian cultural codes. Two sequences in which the title character turns from black to white, for example, occasionally misread as racist by North Americans, are in fact sardonic comments on Brazil's putative 'racial democracy'.

A comprehensive methodology must pay attention to the *mediations* which intervene between 'reality' and representation. Its emphasis should be on narrative structure, genre conventions, and cinematic style rather than on perfect correctness of representation or fidelity to an original 'real'

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'Grotesque realism' in *Macunaíma*, 1969.

22 Tom Engelhardt, 'Ambush at Kamikaze Pass', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, op cit.

23 In the racist hierarchies of *The Wild Geese*, white males stand at the apex, while women are treated as comically dispensible and blacks are relegated to the bottom. The film camouflages its racism, however, by two plot devices involving positive images: first, by including a token black (a positive image?) as a member of the mercenary force (genocide rendered palatable by 'integrating' its perpetrators) and second, by having the entire operation be undertaken on behalf of a black leader characterised as 'the best there is'. The African 'best', however, is embodied by a sick, helpless, dying 'good negro' who must be literally carried on the backs of whites. In this white rescue fantasy, the black leader of the 70s speaks the Sidney Poitier dialogue of the 50s; he pleads for racial understanding. The blacks, he says, must forgive the white past, and whites must forgive the black

model or prototype. We must beware of mistakes in which the criteria appropriate to one genre are applied to another. A search for positive images in *Macunaíma*, for example, would be fundamentally misguided, for that film belongs to a carnivalesque genre favouring what Mikhail Bakhtin calls 'grotesque realism'. Virtually all the film's characters are two-dimensional grotesques rather than rounded three-dimensional characters, and the grotesquerie is democratically distributed among all the races, whle the most archly grotesque characters are the white industrialist cannibal and his ghoulish spouse. Satirical or parodic films, in the same way, may be less concerned with constructing positive images than with challenging the stereotypical expectations an audience may bring to a film. *Blazing Saddles* lampoons a whole range of ethnic prejudices, mocking audience expectations by having the whites sing 'Ole Man River' while the blacks sing 'I Get No Kick from Champagne'.

Political Positioning

One mediation specific to cinema is spectator positioning. The paradigmatic filmic encounters of whites and Indians in the western, as Tom Engelhardt points out, typically involve images of encirclement. The attitude toward the Indian is premised on exteriority. The besieged wagon train or fort is the focus of our attention and sympathy, and from this centre our familiars sally out against unknown attackers characterised by inexplicable customs and irrational hostility: 'In essence, the viewer is forced behind the barrel of a repeating rifle and it is from that position, through its gun sights, that he [sic] receives a picture history of western colonialism and imperialism.'[22] The possibility of sympathetic identifications with the Indians is simply ruled out by the point-of-view conventions. The spectator is unwittingly sutured into a colonialist perspective.

A film like *The Wild Geese* (directed by Andrew McLaglen, 1978) inherits the conventions of anti-Indian westerns and extends them to Africa. This glorification of the role of white mercenaries in Africa makes the mercenaries, played by popular heroic actors Richard Burton, Richard Harris and Roger Moore, the central focus of our sympathy. Even the gamblers and opportunists among them, recruited from the flotsam and jetsam of British society, are rendered as sympathetic, lively and humorous. Killing Africans *en masse*, the film implies, fosters camaraderie and somehow brings out their latent humanity. White Europe's right to determine Africa's political destiny, like the white American right to Indian land in the western, is simply assumed throughout the film.[23]

In *The Wild Geese*, the imagery of encirclement is used against black Africans, as the spectator, positioned behind the sight of mercenary machine guns, sees them fall in their hundreds. One of the crucial innovations of *Battle of Algiers* (directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) was to invert this imagery of encirclement and exploit the identificatory mechanisms of

cinema on behalf of the colonised rather than the coloniser. Algerians, traditionally represented in cinema as shadowy figures, picturesquely backward at best and hostile and menacing at worst, are here treated with respect, dignified by close-ups, shown as speaking subjects rather than as manipulable objects. While never caricaturing the French, the film exposes the oppressive logic of colonialism and consistently fosters our complicity with the Algerians. It is through Algerian eyes, for example, that we witness a condemned Algerian's walk to his execution. It is from *within* the casbah that we see and hear the French troops and helicopters. This time it is the colonised who are encircled and menaced and with whom we identify.

Black Africans filmed from behind white gunsights: *The Wild Geese*, 1978.

One sequence, in which three Algerian women dress in European style in order to pass the French checkpoints and plant bombs in the European sector, is particularly effective in controverting traditional patterns of identification. Many critics, impressed with the film-makers' honesty in showing that the FLN committed terrorist acts against civilians, lauded this sequence for its 'objectivity'. (Objectivity, as Fanon pointed out, almost always works against the colonised.) But that *Battle of Algiers* shows such acts is ultimately less important than *how* it shows them; the signified of the diegesis (terrorist actions) is less important than the mode of address and the positioning of the spectator. The film makes us want the women to complete their task, not necessarily out of political sympathy but through the mechanisms of cinematic identification: scale (close shots individualise the three women); off-screen sound (we hear

the sexist comments as if from the women's aural perspective); and especially point-of-view editing. By the time the women plant the bombs, our identification is so complete that we are not terribly disturbed by a series of close shots of the bombs' potential victims. Close-ups of one of the women alternate with close-ups of French people in a cafe, the eyeline matches suggesting that she is contemplating the suffering her bomb will cause. But while we might think her cruel for taking innocent life, we are placed within her perspective and admire her for having the courage to perform what has been presented as a dangerous and noble mission.

Other narrative and cinematic strategies are deployed in this sequence to solicit support for the three women. The narrative placement of the sequence itself presents their action as the fulfilment of the FLN promise, made in the previous sequence, to respond to the French terror bombing of the casbah. Everything here contributes to the impression that the bombing will be an expression of the rage of an entire people rather than the will of a fanatical minority. It is constructed, therefore, not as an individual emotional explosion but as a considered political task undertaken with reluctance by an organised group. The sequence consequently challenges the image of anti-colonialist guerrillas as terrorist fanatics lacking respect for human life. Unlike the Western mass media, which usually restrict their definition of 'terror' to anti-establishment violence – state repression and government-sanctioned aerial bombings are not included in the definition – *Battle of Algiers* presents anti-colonialist terror as a response to colonialist violence. We are dealing here with what might be called the political dimension of syntagmatic organisation; while the First World media usually present colonial repression as a response to 'leftist subversion', *Battle of Algiers* inverts the sequencing. Indeed, examining the film as a whole, we might say that Pontecorvo 'highjacks'

The woman as revolutionary: an assassination attempt in *Battle of Algiers*.

the techniques of mass-media reportage – hand-held cameras, frequent zooms, long lenses – to express a political point of view rarely encountered in establishment-controlled media.

24 Frantz Fanon, op cit, p 38.

The *mise-en-scène*, too, creates a non-sexist and anti-colonialist variant on the classic cinematic *topos*: women dressing in front of a mirror. The lighting highlights the powerful dignity of the womens' faces as they remove their veils, cut their hair and apply make-up so as to look European. The mirror here is not the instrument of *vanitas*, but a revolutionary tool. The women regard themselves, without coyness, as if they were putting on a new identity with which they do not feel entirely comfortable. They perform their task in a disciplined manner and without vindictive remarks about their future victims.

The film also highlights the larger social dimension of the drama in which the women are involved. The colonial world, writes Fanon, is a world cut in two: 'In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression.'[24] The background imagery, readable thanks to the depth of field, show that the French have imposed their regime by what amounts to military occupation. The French are in uniform, the Algerians in civilian dress. The casbah is the Algerian's home; for the French it is an outpost on a frontier. The barbed wire and checkpoints remind us of other occupations, thus eliciting our sympathy for a struggle against a foreign occupant. The proairetic 'code of actions', meanwhile, shows the soldiers treating the Algerians with racist scorn and suspicion, while they greet the Europeans with a friendly 'bonjour'. They misperceive the three women as French and flirtatious when in fact they are Algerian and revolutionary. Their sexism, furthermore, prevents them from seeing women, generally, as potential revolutionaries. In the nega-

Make-up as military strategy: European disguise in *Battle of Algiers*, 1966.

16

[25] For a fuller
discussion of this
film, see Joan
Mellen, *Filmguide
to The Battle of
Algiers*,
Bloomington,
Indiana University
Press, 1973 and
Robert Stam, *The
Battle of Algiers:
Three Women,
Three Bombs*,
Macmillan Films
Study Extract,
1975.

[26] Some left critics
dismissed *Battle of
Algiers* as a
Hollywoodean
Z-style exercise in
political
melodrama. Such
critiques run the
dangers of being 1)
ahistorical (we
must situate the
film in the context
of 1966); 2)
politically *counter-
productive* (the
Left deprives itself
of a powerful
instrument of anti-
colonialist
persuasion); and 3)
ethnocentric
(offering an
example of a kind
of Left
colonialism).
While the Right
asks all pro-Third
World films to
display high
production values
and be
entertaining, a
certain Left asks
all pro-Third
World films to be
deconstructive,
reflexive, and to
display the precise
variant of
Marxism that the
particular First-
World critic finds
most sympathetic.

tive dialectic of oppression, the slave (the colonised, the black, the woman) knows the mind of the master better than the master knows the mind of the slave.

Western attitudes toward non-Western peoples are also played on here. Hassiba is first seen in traditional Arab costume, her face covered by a veil. So dressed, she is a reminder of Arab women in other films who function as a sign of the exotic. But as the sequence progresses, we become increasingly close to the three women, though paradoxically, we become close to them only as they strip themselves of their safsaris, their veils, and their hair. They transform themselves into Europeans, people with whom the cinema more conventionally allows the audience to iden- tify. At the same time, we are made aware of the absurdity of a system in which people warrant respect only if they look and act like Europeans. The French colonialist myth of 'assimilation', the idea that select Alger- ians could be first-class French citizens, is demystified. Algerians can assimilate, it is suggested, but only at the price of shedding everything that is characteristically Algerian about them—their religion, their clothes, their language.[25]

If *Battle of Algiers* exploits conventional identification mechanisms on behalf of a group traditionally denied them, other films critique colonial- ism and colonialist point-of-view conventions in a more ironic mode.[26] *Petit à Petit* (directed by Jean Rouch, 1969) inverts the hierarchy often assumed within the discipline of anthropology, the academic offspring of colonialism, by having the African protagonist Damouré 'do anthropol- ogy' among the strange tribe known as the Parisians, interrogating them about their folkways. Europe, usually the bearer of the anthropological gaze, is here subjected to the questioning regard of the other. *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* (directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1971), meanwhile, updates Montaigne by persuading us to sympathise with Tupinamba cannibals.[27] The film plays ironically on the traditional identification with European heroes by placing the camera, initially, on American shores, so that the Amerindian discovers the European rather than the reverse. By the final shot, which shows the Frenchman's Tupi- namba lover dining on him while manifesting no emotion beyond ordin- ary culinary pleasure, our 'natural' identification with the coloniser has been so completely subverted that we are quite indifferent to his fate.

The question of point of view is crucial then, but it is also more com- plex than might at first appear. The granting of point-of-view shots to the oppressed does not guarantee a non-colonialist perspective, any more than Hitchcock's granting of subjective shots to the female protagonist of *Marnie* innoculates that film from what is ultimately a patriarchal and infantilising discourse. The arch-racist *The Birth of a Nation* grants Gus, the sexually aggressive black man, a number of subjective shots as he admires little Flora. The racism in such a case may be said to be dis- placed from the code of editing onto the code of character construction, here inflected by the projection of white sexual paranoia onto the black male, in the case of Gus, and of patriarchal chivalry (tinged perhaps with authorial desire), in the case of Flora. The Brazilian film *João Negrinho*

(directed by Oswaldo Censoni, 1954) is entirely structured around the perspective of its focal character, an elderly ex-slave. The film apparently presents all events from João's point of view so as to elicit total sympathy, yet what the film elicits sympathy *for* is in fact a paternalistic vision in which 'good' blacks are to leave their destiny in the hands of well-intentioned whites.

Codes and Counter Strategies

A more comprehensive analysis of character status as speaking subject as against spoken object would attend to cinematic and extra-cinematic codes, and to their interweaving within textual systems. In short, it must address the instances through which film speaks – composition, framing, scale, off- and on-screen sound, music – as well as questions of plot and character. Questions of image scale and duration, for example, are intricately related to the respect afforded a character and the potential for audience sympathy, understanding and identification. Which characters are afforded close-ups and which are relegated to the background? Does a character look and act, or merely appear, to be looked at and acted upon? With whom is the audience permitted intimacy? If there is off-screen commentary or dialogue, what is its relation to the image? *Black Girl* (directed by Ousmane Sembene, 1966) uses off-screen dialogue to foster intimacy with the title character, a Senegalese maid working in France. Shots of the maid working in the kitchen coincide with overheard slurs from her employers about her 'laziness'. Not only do the images point up the absurdity of the slurs – indeed, she is the *only* person working – but also the coincidence of the off-screen dialogue with close shots of her face makes us hear the comments as if through her ears.

An emphasis on identification, however, while appropriate to fiction films in the realist mode, fails to allow for films which might *also* show sensitivity to the point of view, in a more inconclusive sense, of the colonised or the oppressed, but in a rigorously distanced manner. A film like *Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças* (directed by Glauber Rocha, 1970), whose multi-lingual title already subverts the cultural positioning of the spectator by mingling the languages of five of Africa's colonisers, allows identification with none of its characters, because it is essentially a Brechtian 'tricontinental' fable which animates emblematic figures representing the diverse incarnations of coloniser and colonised in the Third World. 'Zumbi', named after the founder of the Brazilian fugitive slave republic Palmares, encapsulates the revolution in Africa and among the black diaspora; 'Samba' embodies the power of Afro-culture; and 'Xobu' figures in caricatural form the corruption of the black puppets of colonialism. To condemn such a film for not creating identification with the oppressed is to reduce the broad question of the articulation of narrative, cinematic and cultural codes to the single question of the presence or absence of a particular sub-code of editing.

[27] Montaigne's essay 'Des Cannibales', was, ironically, based on interviews with Brazilian Indians then on display in Europe. The Indians, according to Montaigne, asked him three questions, only two of which he could remember: 1) Why were some people rich and others poor? 2) Why did Europeans worship kings who were no bigger than other people? Lévi-Strauss, more than three centuries later, claims to have been asked the same questions by Brazilian Indians.

28 The film also
made the mistake
of pitting one of
the First World's
most charismatic
actors (Marlon
Brando), as the
coloniser, against a
former peasant
non-actor (Evaristo
Marques), as the
colonised, thus
disastrously tipping
the scales of
interest, if not
sympathy, in
favour of the
coloniser.

The music track can also play a crucial role in the establishment of a political point of view and the cultural positioning of the spectator. Film music has an emotional dimension: it can regulate our sympathies, extract our tears or trigger our fears. The Ray Budd score in *The Wild Geese* consistently supports the mercenaries, waxing martial and heroic when they are on the attack, and maudlin when they emote. At one point, the Borodin Air 'This is My Beloved' musically eulogises one of the slain mercenaries. In many classical Hollywood films, African poly-rhythms became aural signifiers of encircling savagery, a kind of synec-dochic acoustic shorthand for the atmosphere of menace implicit in the phrase 'the natives are restless'. *Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças*, in contrast, treats African polyrhythms with respect, as music, while iron-ically associating the puppets of colonialism with 'La Marseillaise'. *Black and White in Color* employs music satirically by having the African colonised carry their colonial masters, while singing – in their own lan-guage – satirical songs about them ('My master is so fat, how can I carry him? ... Yes, but mine is so ugly. ... ').

In many consciously anti-colonialist films, a kind of textual uneven development makes the film politically progressive in some of its codes but regressive in others. *Burn!* (directed by Gillo Pontecòrvo, 1970), for example, a didactic assault on neo-colonialism, partially vitiates its message by imposing highly Europeanised choral music on its Third World setting.[28] *Compasso de Espera* (*Marking Time*, directed by Antunes Filho, 1973), a denunciation of Brazilian-style racism, subverts its pro-black position with a music track that mixes Erik Satie and Blood Sweat and Tears while ignoring the rich Afro-Brazilian musical heritage. On the other hand *Land in Anguish* (directed by Glauber Rocha, 1967) uses music to the opposite effect. Here, in a film dealing with Brazil's white political elite, Afro-Brazilian music serves as a constant reminder of the existence of the marginalised majority of blacks and mulattoes absent from the screen and not represented by that elite. Brazilian films in general, perhaps because of the ethnically 'polyphonic' nature of that society, are particularly rich in inter-codic contradiction, at times insti-tuting a veritable battle of the codes on the music tracks. *The Given Word* (directed by Anselmo Duarte, 1962) sets in motion a cultural conflict between the Afro-Brazilian *berimbau* instrument and the bells of the Catholic Church, while *Tent of Miracles* (directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1976) counterpoints opera and samba to represent a larger conflict between Bahia's white elite and its subjugated *mestizos*.

Aberrant Readings

The filmic experience must inevitably be inflected by the cultural aware-ness of the audience itself, constituted outside the text and traversed by sets of social relations such as race, class and gender. We must allow, therefore, for the possibility of aberrant readings, readings which go against the grain of the discourse. Although fiction films are persuasive

machines designed to produce specific impressions and emotions, they are not all-powerful; they may be read differently by different audiences. Hollywood's ill-informed portrayals of Latin-American life were sometimes laughed off the screen within Latin America itself. The Spanish version of *Dracula*, for example, made concurrently with the 1931 Bela Lugosi film, mingles Cuban, Argentine, Chilean, Mexican and peninsular Spanish in a linguistic hodge-podge that struck Latin-American audiences as quite ludicrous.

A particular audience's knowledge or experience can also generate a counter-pressure to colonialist representations. Black Americans, presumably, never took Stepin Fetchit to be an accurate representation of their race as a whole. *One Potato Two Potato* (directed by Larry Peerce, 1964), a film about interracial marriage, provides a poignant narrative example, in which the experience of oppression inflects a character's reading of the film-within-the-film. The black husband, enraged by a series of racially-motivated slights, attends a western in a drive-in movie theatre. Projecting his anger, he screams his support for the Indians, whom he sees as his analogues in suffering, and his hatred for the whites. His reading goes against the grain of the colonialist discourse.

The movement of an aberrant reading can also proceed in the opposite direction; an anti-racist film, when subjected to the ethnocentric prejudices of a particular critic or interpretive community, can be read in a racist fashion. A sequence in *Masculine, Feminine*, a quotation from LeRoi Jones' play *The Dutchman*, shows a blonde white woman in the metro accompanied by two black men. At the conclusion of the sequence, a shot of the woman's hand holding a revolver gives way, shortly thereafter, to the sound of gunfire and a title: 'Nothing but a Woman/ and a Man/And a Sea of Blood.' Andrew Sarris, in his account of the sequence, ignores the visual and written evidence that it is the woman who wields the gun: '. . . a Negro nationalist draws out a gun with phallic fury in the metro.'[29] Here, cultural expectations inform the very perceptions of the viewer, who projects his own racial and sexual expectations onto the film.[30]

We must be aware, then, of the cultural and ideological assumptions spectators bring to the cinema., We must be conscious, too, of the institutionalised expectations, the mental machinery that serves as the subjective support to the film industry, and which leads us to consume films in a certain way. This apparatus has adapted most of us to the consumption of films which display high production values. But many Third World film-makers find such a model, if not repugnant, at least inappropriate – not only because of their critique of dominant cinema, but also because the Third World, with its scarcer capital and higher costs, simply cannot *afford* it. Significantly, such film-makers and critics argue for a model rooted in the actual circumstances of the Third World: a 'third cinema' (Solanas-Gettino), 'an aesthetic of hunger' (Rocha), and 'an imperfect cinema' (Espinosa). To expect to find First World production values in Third World films is to be both naive and ethnocentric. To prospect for Third World auteurs, similarly, is to apply a regressive

[29] From Sarris' review in the *Village Voice*, September 29-October 6, 1966, included in *Masculine, Feminine*, New York, Grove Press, 1969, pp 275-279.

[30] In the case of Cuban films, ethnocentrism merges with anti-communism to distort the perception of First World critics. Many American critics, for example, identified very strongly with the alienated artist-intellectual protagonist of Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968) and with his disabused view of the Cuban people. Seeing the film as an auteurist lament concerning the low level of cultural life in Cuba and the repressive nature of the Cuban regime, Andrew Sarris spoke for these critics (in his explanation of the award given the film by the National Society of Film Critics) when he claimed that what struck them most favourably was the film's 'personal and very courageous confrontation of the artist's doubts and ambivalences regarding the Cuban revolution'. Such critics completely missed

20 the film's critique both of the protagonist and of pre-revolutionary Cuba.

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analytical model which implicitly valorises dominant cinema and promises only to invite a few elite members of the Third World into an already-established pantheon.

The objective of this study of filmic colonialism and racism, finally, is not to hurl charges of racism at individual film-makers or critics – in a systematically racist society few escape the effects of racism – but rather to learn how to decode and deconstruct racist images and sounds. Racism is not permanently inscribed in celluloid or in the human mind; it forms part of a constantly changing dialectical process within which, we must never forget, we are far from powerless.

'THE BIRTH OF A NOTION'

IRENE KOTLARZ EXAMINES THE REPRESENTATION OF BLACKS IN THE ANIMATED CARTOON

IN THE YEARS when the Hollywood film industry was at its height, from the 1930s to the 1950s, cartoons were a regular part of cinema programmes. All the major film production companies had some involvement in the production and distribution of animation, Warner Brothers[1] and MGM having set up their own studio units in 1933 and '34 respectively, while the others had distribution arrangements or affiliation with independent producers;[2] Disney enjoyed a special position as the independent who challenged and survived the oligopoly of the Majors in the '30s. The relationship of cartoon shorts to 'live action' features is complex and fascinating, involving a wealth of references to well-known stars, narratives, even to the language of Hollywood cinema generally,[3] as well as the cartoons' own codes, star systems etc, all of which suggest a currency of accepted familiarity on the part of audiences. Yet this is largely neglected within conventional histories and theories of the Hollywood film industry, which seem to regard 'live action' as the only legitimate filmic product. So, although black characters of many kinds were a regular feature of animated film, this is ignored by the major monographs on the representation of blacks in cinema.[4]

I would argue that animation should be taken account of within studies of the Hollywood industry as a whole. More specifically, in relation to discussions of representation, the drawn or modelled[5] images of animation – as opposed to photographic images of 'real' people – can be seen to be more clearly 'constructed' or 'created'. Where such discussions consider an area such as racism,[6] representations in animation can be seen to point up very clearly some of the issues involved, such as the emphasis on physical characteristics. Some of the images of blacks in Hollywood animation must be among the clearest expressions of national and corporate racism produced by modern mass media. Yet perhaps pre-

[1] The title of this article is that of a 1947 Warner Brothers cartoon, directed by Robert McKimson.

[2] Disney was with United Artists 1930-37; RKO distributed Van Beuren cartoons until they took over Disney in 1937 (Disney set up his own distribution company, Buena Vista, in the '50s). Fox distributed Paul Terry's Terrytoons until 1968; Paramount distributed Fleischer, among others; Universal – Walter Lantz; and Columbia produced through a number of small companies until it affiliated with UPA in 1948.

[3] For a discussion of the 'self-reflexivity'

of Hollywood animation, cf Dana Polan, 'Brecht and the Politics of Self-Reflexive Cinema', *Jump Cut* no 17, pp 29-32.

4 eg Jim Pines, *Blacks in the Cinema*, London, the British Film Institute, 1970.

5 This is the case with Hollywood animation, but does not always have to be so; a wider definition would be any film which is made frame by frame, and may employ the photograph.

6 'Racism' here refers to the ideologies produced by one (dominant) racial group in relation to other races, which serve to uphold and rationalise its domination.

7 For an account of this meeting (of which a transcript apparently exists) and a wider, detailed account of the Disney studio during World War II, cf Richard Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up*, UMI Research Press (Bowker, UK), 1982, p 16.

8 Grierson said: 'To all of us who have operated with pedagogical films, it is a great problem to secure lucidity in the ordinary documentary way ...Animation

cisely *because* of their embarrassing clarity they are now rarely seen and are hard to come by (legally, that is), having been quietly suppressed by the companies which produced them, as have wartime anti-German and anti-Japanese propaganda cartoons.

These are examples of negative representation of national or racial groups in animation at a specific historical moment. As with 'live action' films, there is evidence of connections between political events and certain kinds of narrative, representations of foreigners and so on. This is extremely clear during World War II, when the US Government lost no time in recruiting animation studios, in particular Disney, to the war effort. Disney had already been angling for this, and had held a meeting at his studio earlier, on April 3 1941, to discuss the possible 'application of animation to purposes other than "entertainment"',[7] which Grierson, among others, attended.

What emerged from this meeting was an affirmation that animation can get across a message very clearly and powerfully,[8] partly because of its tradition of satire and caricature, and the concealment of aggression within humour. Some of the earliest animated films were produced as documentary and propaganda, in Britain from the First World War through to the '30s,[9] in Russia in the '20s at Vertov's studio, and in the US with Winsor McCay's 1918 *Sinking of the Lusitania*. Because Hollywood, and especially Disney, flooded the market from the '30s with fairy tales and little furry animals, animation is now usually discussed (if at all) in terms of fantasy, difference from reality[10] and so on. Yet it has been pointed out often enough[11] that Disney's cute little characters both encapsulate and conceal some of the nastier aspects of US imperialism. Examples of this include the films and comics produced for Central and South America in the '40s as part of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy.

Animation is important because the ideological force of its meanings can function precisely as an iron fist in the velvet glove of gags and sentimentality. Disney's *Victory through Air Power* and *Der Fuehrer's Face* (both 1943; the latter won an Academy Award that year) work partly through enlisting the audience's sympathy with little characters such as Donald Duck against nasty huge, obese, aggressive and stupid caricatures of Germans. Fleischer's *You're a Sap, Mr. Jap* (1942), and Warner Brothers' *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*[12] (1944) show popular characters (Popeye and Bugs respectively) outwitting caricatures of Japanese as small, short-sighted, buck-toothed, and sneaky.

Such images draw upon a whole catalogue of cultural and racist myths. When combined with the expressive potency of animation's history of caricature and satire, and Hollywood's refinement of characterisation to the point of minute individualised differences between seven very similar dwarfs, or the ability to send audiences rolling in the aisles at one flare of Bugs Bunny's nostril, the industry was provided with a sophisticated representational weapon. The anti-German and anti-Japanese cartoons were withdrawn after the war to avoid offending re-opened foreign markets, but the representation of blacks in animation continued until well into the 1950s (as did that of other groups, such as American

Indians, Mexicans and so on). This may be ascribed to a lack of political pressure from within the animation industry, unlike 'live action'; there certainly seem to have been few, if any, black animators.[13] It may be because cartoons were not taken seriously; black characters usually appeared in musical and comic shorts, and there was no internal lobbying for 'better' roles, more interesting characters and so on.

By the late '50s black characters simply stopped appearing: the themes in which they had usually appeared were dropped, and no attempt was made to create new ones with more interesting or less objectionable representations. This seems to have been largely due to changes in the market to accommodate television, and a shift in emphasis for animation towards children as an audience. Animation had to be produced much more cheaply than before, and concern over controversial issues and censoring of anything potentially damaging rendered areas such as racial representation so sensitive that it was avoided completely. This in itself might contribute to animation's apparent avoidance of 'real' social or political issues. Quietly suppressing or dropping this difficult area, however, failed to solve any problems. Because racist images of blacks in animation have not been examined and discussed, they have not been exorcised, and tend still to appear in contemporary films produced in Britain and elsewhere, often in the context of a nostalgic reference to Hollywood cartoons of the '30s and '40s. An animated film assisted by the Arts Council in 1980, Paul Vester's *Sunbeam*, a musical set to a song written in 1941, pays homage to certain conventions of Hollywood musical cartoons, including the use of stock black stereotypes.
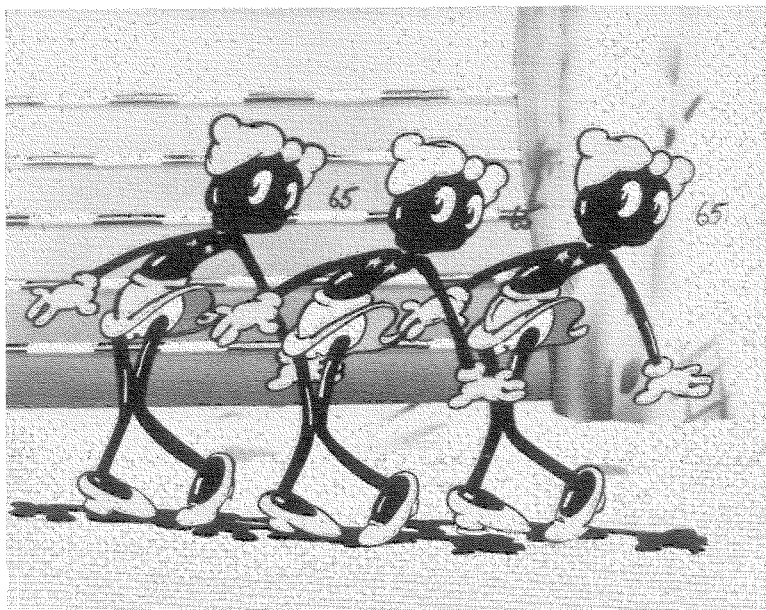
Sunbeam (directed by Paul Vester, 1980) employs the black stereotypes of previous musical cartoons.

seems to have a capacity for simplifying the presentation of pedagogical problems as documentary films haven't'. (Transcript of April 3, 1941 meeting, Shale, op cit, p 16).

[9] cf Marcin Gizycki, 'Animation versus Reality', *Animafilm* 7, January 1981, pp 10-15.

[10] eg Gilbert Seldes, 'The Lovely Art, Magic' in Mast and Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism*, Oxford 1979, pp 594-605.

[11] Notably by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck*, International General, 1975.

[12] Of this film, Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck, in *The Warner Brothers Cartoons*, Scarecrow Press, 1981 (p 106), observe: 'Harmless fun in which the Japanese are treated as total idiots and spastic morons, addressed by Bugs as "Bowlegs, Monkey Face" and "Slant Eyes" among other things ... A wartime classic, not shown on television for obvious reasons.'

[13] I have come across no references to any. Studio group

photographs show
none, either.

That such themes should continue to be employed is perhaps partly (to be generous) attributable to persisting associations of animation with pleasure, fantasy, technical flair, and non-serious issues. Examination of the original Hollywood cartoons shows that black characters were represented within the same contexts and narratives as 'live action' films, falling into the general categories Jim Pines identifies in *Blacks in the Cinema*: the Uncle Tom, faithful servant type; the comedian/buffoon or minstrel; and the knife-carrying savage. However, they relate most closely to the early film tradition, dating up to the '20s, of employing 'blackface' actors within usually rudimentary narratives to display mythical qualities attributed to the race, such as a love of music and rhythm, religiousness and superstition, large appetites, primitive simplicity. This tradition also offered a gross caricature of physical characteristics, which owes a great deal of its iconography to nineteenth century illustrations and comics, as well as to vaudeville acts. The relationship between animation and vaudeville was originally very close, via so-called 'chalk-talks' – vaudeville acts involving drawing on a blackboard. Filmed 'chalk-talks' are seen as a precursor to animation, in Stuart Blackton's *Lightning Sketches*. One of these (Vitagraph, 1907) shows Blackton next to a chalk caricature of a minstrel figure with rolling eyes and thick lips; the word 'Cohen' is written next to it. This apparently refers to a popular vaudeville gag playing on the words 'Coon', 'Cohen' and 'Kelly' and corresponding caricatures.

The vaudeville minstrel often appeared in animation, with an emphasis on total uniformity for which the word 'stereotype'[14] seems appropriate. A row of them appears at the end of Warner Brothers' *Fresh Hare* (1942) in which Bugs is captured by 'mounties' and placed before a firing squad; granted one last wish he sings 'I wish I were in Dixie' and the firing squad transforms into a row of minstrels, and Bugs himself into a blackface rabbit. The film is still shown on television but the ending is usually cut.

Another early stereotype which stresses uniformity is the 'native' defined in terms of 'otherness' from white Western culture. This type also derives from nineteenth century illustrations, a very early example being John Randolph Bray's 1914 *Colonel Heezaliar in Africa* series, from the comic strip of the same name. Cartoons in this vein usually show a representative of Western culture arriving – through trade, exploration, shipwreck or plane crash – at a usually unspecified and geographically inaccurate desert island or jungle. These emissaries include Mickey Mouse (Disney's *Trader Mickey*, 1932), Krazy Kat (Columbia's *Kannibal Kapers*, 1935), Bosko (Warner Brothers' and Hugh Harman's *Bosko and the Cannibals*, 1937), and Willie Whopper (MGM/Ub Iwerks' *Jungle Jitters*, 1932). The 'natives' are usually shown as semi-naked, grass skirted, decorated with bones etc, and aggressive. Often they are cannibals and the hero is put in a pot, but he usually easily outwits the natives either through guile, as in *Jungle Jitters*, or by exploiting their natural rhythm and susceptibility to music, so making them forget their hostility. In *Trader Mickey*, Mickey Mouse

[14] Here 'stereotype' refers to an abstracted image repeated from one text to another. For fuller discussion cf Tessa Perkins, 'Rethinking Stereotypes' in Michele Barrett et al (eds), *Ideology and Cultural Production*, Croom Helm, 1979.

arrives on an island with lots of consumer goodies, including musical instruments (presumably to sell or barter); he charms his way out of the cannibals' pot by showing them how to play the instruments, and they abandon themselves to music and dancing. The spectacle of the dancing cannibals is not unlike that of the dancing skeletons in Disney's earlier *Skeleton Dance* (1928); they are similarly shown as identical and undifferentiated elements in the general spectacle.
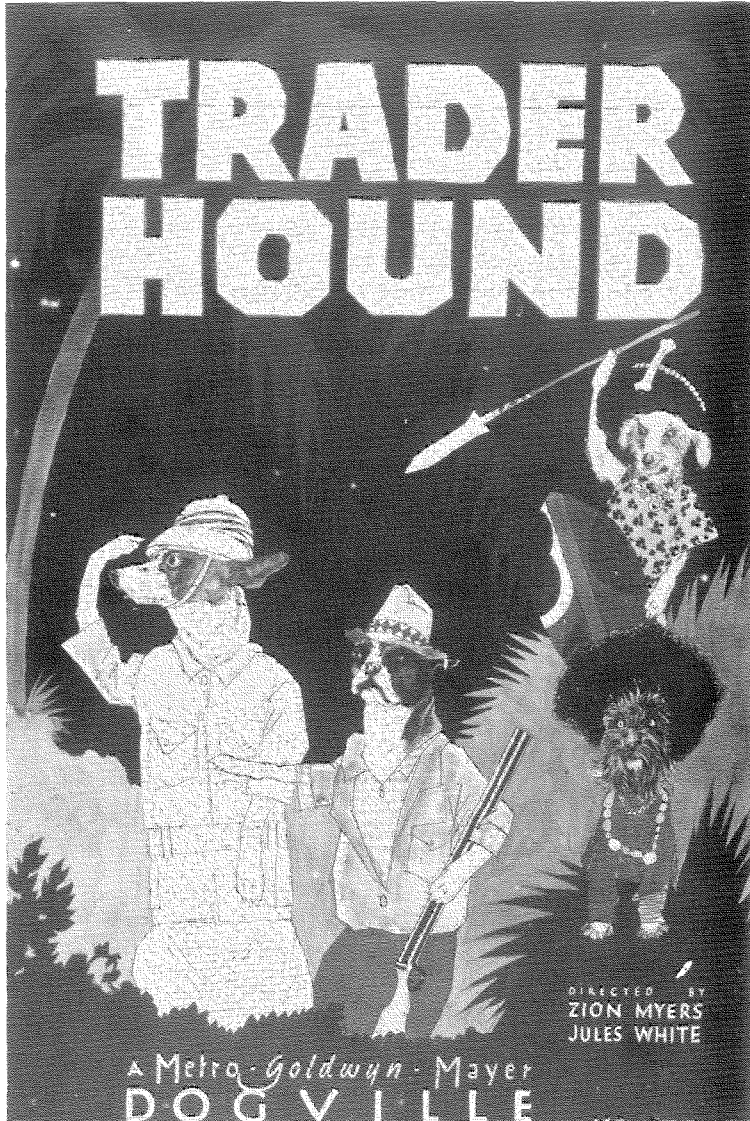
White animal imperialists in MGM's *Trader Hound* (courtesy Kobal Collection and MGM).

These associations of non-whites with a sub-human susceptibility to 'jungle music' carry over into cartoons which do not necessarily show

natives, but dancing animals, for example Bosko in *Congo Jazz* (Warners', 1930); Bugs Bunny in *Gorilla My Dreams* (Warners', 1948) – where Bugs floats in a barrel to Bingzi-Bangzi, the land of ferocious apes who all dance to a hit tune of the time, Raymond Scott's 'Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals'; and of course Disney's *Jungle Book* (1967), featuring the voice of Louis Armstrong. Other characteristics of this 'native' scenario often include a corrupt social organisation – for instance, the despotic rule of an obese, greedy and indolent King or Queen. At other times these characters are portrayed with no social organisation at all, and are hunted as animals (Warners' *Pygmy Hunt*, 1938; MGM's *Half Pint Pygmy*, 1948, and Warner Brothers' *Inki and the Mynah Bird* series of the '40s and early '50s). The latter features a 'native' character called Inki, who wears a grass skirt, carries a spear, and has a topknot with a bone through it. In *Inki at the Circus* (1947) he is the 'wild man' and gets chased around the ring by the animals after the bone in his topknot. The clear connections made between this 'native' type and animals are only complicated when the Western explorer, shown to be far superior, is in fact a mouse named Mickey! Strange inversions and reversals are made between human/animals in the interest of racism, so that in Warners' *Which is Witch* (1949), Bugs Bunny is an explorer captured by the pygmy witch doctor 'Doctor Ugh' and put into a pressure cooker. The pygmy is thereby presented as a cannibal (although he only wants to dine on rabbit).

A number of themes in animation derive from the Old Plantation scenarios of live action films. The Southern plantation was a popular setting in early cinema, from very early shorts of plantation dances like Edison's

The black woman as voracious spider in MGM's *Lady Bug* (courtesy Kobal Collection and MGM).

Pickaninnies (1897), to the many versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. With the introduction of sound and the setting of animation to music, many of the studios produced series of short musical cartoons – such as Disney's *Silly Symphonies*, Warners' *Looney Tunes* and the same studio's *Merry Melodies* – some of whose casts were all black and referred back to the earlier 'live action' plantation dances. Two examples are MGM's *The Old Plantation* (1935) and their *Swing Wedding* (1937). Apart from dancing, other aspects of the myth of the Old South which appear in animation include associations of blacks with large appetites. A silent Felix cartoon of the '20s, *Felix Gets his Fill*, shows him being enticed by a black cabaret singer's song about Southern food ('Pork chops and yam, I'll find in Alabam') and a poster of a black 'mammy' holding a plate of fried chicken. Felix travels south in search of it all, and there discovers another stereotype, the cotton-picking black slave, and realises he has to pick cotton himself to earn the food. The food-loving southern black also appears in the later *Jasper and the Haunted House*, a George Pal 'Puppetoon' of the '40s (distributed by Famous/Paramount). This is a model animation on the 'dark old house' theme, full of ghosts and rolling-eyed frightened blacks. Another in the series, the equally racist *John Henry and the Inky Pooh*, won an Academy Award in 1946.

One of the justifications for the continued production of such films was their alleged popularity with audiences. This is virtually impossible to prove, because as shorts they have no separate box office ratings. However, within the mythology of the animation industry, a series of all-black musicals produced at Warners in the '30s and '40s were among the most popular cartoons of all time, culminating in the notorious *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarves*, directed by Bob Clampett in 1942. A send-up of Disney's 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, particularly its sentimentality, the cartoon emphasises the connotations of 'black'. It features 'So-White', who is of course black, and 'Prince Chawmin'', who has two dice in place of front teeth, and a gross, obese Queen presented as coarse, vulgar and greedy as well as wicked. There is also a sinister black 'Murder Squad' who wipe out 'anybody – at a price ... Japs free' (it was made during the War). The Seven Dwarfs are little soldiers who live in an army tent, and for whom So-White cooks bacon and eggs which form in the pan into a smiling 'black-face' image. When the Queen injects an apple with poison, a 'black-face' maggot pops out, followed by lots of baby black-face maggots. The film also plays on notions of black sexuality, representing So-White as the nubile, mini-skirted, jitterbugging object of everyone's lust. The punch-line is the failure of Prince Chawmin's macho promise of virility, as his kiss fails to awaken So-White; indeed he tries so hard and so long that he becomes white-haired and emaciated. Then, at a single kiss from one of the Dwarfs, her eyes open and her pigtails unfurl into two American flags.

Coal Black is listed by Friedwald and Beck [15] as 'one of Clampett's [16] or anyone else's, very best; the most popular cartoon of all time with animation buffs ...'. It was followed six months later by another of Clampett's all-black musicals, *Tin Pan Alley Cats*, which has a caricature

[15] Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck, op cit, p 97.

[16] The question of authorship might be an interesting area, particularly at Warner Brothers. Clampett's name appears in relation to the all-black musicals; the name which recurs by far the most often in relation to films with racist content is that of Friz Freleng, not only at Warners but in the two years he spent at MGM.

[17] cf Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck, op cit, pp xi-xii.

[18] cf 'A talk with Ralph Bakshi' in Gerald Peary and Danny Peary (eds), *The American Animated Cartoon*, Dutton, 1980, p 271: 'I left Paramount in 1969 because I wanted to do cartoons for adults.'

[19] ibid, p 275.

of Fats Waller. (Caricatures of 'live-action' stars were common in animation of the time, especially Warner Brothers', serving partly to promote the studio's roster.) Here Waller is seen lured into a nightclub where he is so carried away by the music that he ends up in 'wackyland'. Afterwards the frightened figure contritely joins Uncle Tom's Mission outside to sing 'Dat Ol' Time Religion'. Play on the religion/superstition of the black stereotype was also a recurring theme, often related to ideas of blacks as dishonest, pleasure-seeking, easily led. *Going to Heaven on a Mule* (1934) features a black character who discovers that 'Pair-o-dice' is a heavenly nightclub where he can do whatever he wants until he succumbs to temptation, picks a bottle of gin off the tree of forbidden fruit and is cast out. Material from this was re-used in the 1937 *Clean Pastures*, which includes caricatures of Bojangles Robinson, Al Jolson, Cab Galloway, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller and the Mills Brothers as 'hep angels', and Stepin Fetchit as a lazy angel.

The disappearance of cartoons such as these from distribution and television screening has probably contributed to their legendary status. Because the images are drawn, they are often seen as not 'real', and their censorship criticised on the grounds of interference with individual freedom of expression.[17] Images in animation are never accidental (although their meaning may be unconscious) because they are produced so laboriously, frame by frame. Racist images of blacks in Hollywood cartoons were not invented by the animators, but drawn from a variety of sources, perfected and repeated. Because cartoons are so expensive to make, profit-seeking producers tended to stick to established formulae. When television took over the market, the consequent threat of censorship for children and the enormous reduction in budgets caused producers to withdraw totally into anodine, mass produced time fillers, exemplified in the work of the Hanna-Barbera studio (*The Flintstones, Huckleberry Hound* etc). From this time on animation became so completely identified with a child audience that by the '70s a 'new' kind of animation, geared specifically towards adults, was launched in the United States by Ralph Bakshi.[18] *Fritz the Cat* (1973) was full of all the things disallowed in television animation—sex, drugs, and violence. It can be seen as an attack on cartoons devoid of any reference to contemporary life and social issues (a tactic originated by Disney so that his films, as culturally and historically unspecific as possible, would continue making money in as many places and for as long as possible). Bakshi came unstuck in trying to tackle the issue of racism (by all accounts, misguidedly) in his 1975 *Coonskin*. Its first public screening, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, attracted a demonstration by the Congress of Racial Equality, with the result that the film was dropped by Paramount, and given to a small distributor who went bankrupt in two weeks. Whatever the problems with *Coonskin* (it has never been shown in Britain) Bakshi was not only recognising the issue of the representation of blacks in animation, but also the lack of black animators. His response included the training of 'nine black animators off the streets of the ghetto'[19] in the medium's techniques.

In Britain a debate about the cartoon representation of black people has opened up inside the animation industry itself, in the Journal of the Association of Cinematographic and Television Technicians. It has focused on films like *Sunbeam*[20] and the endless repetition of images passed down through Hollywood cartoons but originating in even earlier forms of racist representation. Aside from obvious solutions, such as not depicting blacks at all, or searching for so-called 'positive stereotypes' or at least more varied ones,[21] perhaps Hollywood cartoons can provide other possible responses to the problem of racial representation. As well as adopting and caricaturing stereotyped images and notions (racist and other), animation sometimes took up an anarchistic and distanciated relation to its own images and codes, and those of 'live action' films. This tendency has been discussed by Dana Polan[22] in relation to Brechtian aesthetics. He argues that self-reflexivity – the 'pleasure of the text' which occurs frequently in Hollywood animation's cross-currents of references to its own codes and other texts – is not in itself conducive to criticism and change. However, I would counter that there are occasions when this 'de-familiarisation' seems to challenge animation's use of racist representations in a manner which might repay further examination. Tex Avery, for instance, directed a number of highly self-referential cartoons on the theme of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for Warners. In his 1937 version, *Uncle Tom's Bungalow*, the hero says to Simon Legree, 'My body may belong to you, but my soul belongs to Warner Brothers.'

[20] Derek Hayes, 'Where do real people come in?', *Film and Television Technician*, February 1981, p 7.

[21] This is argued in relation to stereotypes of women in the American animated cartoon, by Sybil Delgaudio, 'Seduced and Reduced...', in Gerald Peary and Danny Peary, op cit, p 211-216.

[22] Dana Polan, op cit.

THE POLITICS OF AESTHETIC DISTANCE: THE PRESENTATION OF REPRESENTATION IN 'SAO BERNARDO'

BY JULIANNE BURTON

PREFACE

SPARE, SIMPLE, apparently static, the opening credit sequence in
São Bernardo (directed by Leon Hirszman, Brazil, 1972/3) – like the film
which follows – reveals a remarkably lucid conceptual intricacy upon
closer examination. Through the black mask of boldfaced letters forming
the film's title, which remains fixed upon the screen as the credits role, a
pale tracery of lines gradually assumes more tone and definition.
Deepening from pink to mauve, what was initially an abstract lacework
finally congeals into concrete, human shapes: two semi-draped ladies
depicted in neo-classical style recline in profile, facing each other from
opposite sides of the frame. A cherubic little girl poses frontally between
them, arms upraised. The engraving connotes refinement, restraint,
reverence for a classical heritage. Only when the 'mask' of the films title
is removed is the picture fully exposed for the first time. It is not the
work of art it seemed, but a bank note – a five-*cruzeiro* bill.

In this brief, unassuming and above all static credit sequence, abstract
forms have metamorphised themselves into representational ones, and
the purity of that artistic representation is revealed to have been enlisted
into a base functionality as universally utilised as it is universally
denounced: the 'almighty buck' in its Brazilian variant. The artful
rendering of line upon paper to create form (an activity whose very art-
fulness depends on the confidence with which the beholder assumes its
disinterested elevation from utilitarian function) is exposed as an inci-
dental emblem whose intricacy of design and expertness of execution
merely serve as guarantors of another kind of paper – paper money. The
historicisation of this period note raises questions about historically

coded, period style in the film which is to follow, making obvious the point that styles have a history as well as a relationship to History.

Godard prefaced *Tout va bien* with a visual equivalent of the monetary nexus underlying all artistic production: a long series of checks in payment of various production costs, signed in his own hand. That same year (1972) Leon Hirszman uses a single *cruzeiro* bill to connote the appropriability of art and beauty by capital, while simultaneously raising issues of representation and the relationship which art establishes with its beholder, issues which will prove to be the ontological and ideological axes of his film.

THE PLOT

Based on the homonymous novel written in 1934 by leading regionalist author Graciliano Ramos, the tale *São Bernardo* tells is a simple one. In the film, as in the novel, the owner of São Bernardo plantation, once a day labourer on the property, reviews the steps of his ascent to success. That the protagonist's material wealth is both the product and the generator of his moral bankruptcy becomes clear to the viewer as the story unfolds, though for Paulo Honório himself the full impact of this ultimate self-knowledge is withheld until the final frames of the film. He tells his tale through the frequent use of a voice-over which sets him above and apart from events even while he is being depicted as participating in them. His narration parallels and in effect replaces his largely frustrated efforts in the novel to render his life in a 'literary' mode. In both cases, the motive for the sudden self-scrutiny of this remarkably unreflexive being is the suicide of his wife, Madalena.

THE PROJECT

In this essay, I will argue that *São Bernardo* merits the exhaustive scrutiny to which I am about to subject it because with this film its maker has positioned himself in the crossfire of current critical debate about the most essential cinematic issues: representation, the (in?)compatibility of politics and aesthetics, the positioning of the spectator, the potential inclusivity or exclusivity of the medium itself, and its transformative potential. Such an undertaking, ambitious under even the most conducive circumstances, takes on an additional charge of remarkable courage when attempted in a Third World country under the most intolerant and brutal phase of a repressive political regime.

In the analysis which follows, I will attempt to demonstrate that Hirszman presents his characters and weaves his narrative through not one but three distinct modes of representation, the middle term of which forms a kind of 'bridge' between the other two. *São Bernardo* gives us *both* representation as the multi-levelled re-presentation of that which is prior (Paulo Honório re-presents his life before us, and Hirszman re-presents Graciliano Ramos' novel in cinematic form) and makes the

[1] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* Autumn 1975, vol 16 no 3, p 17.

contrast between the diverse modes he develops to convey (present) those re-presentations integral to the spectator's apprehension of them, thus compelling us to meditate upon the presentation of representation in the film.

Central to the fascination this film exerts is the fact that it is as disconcertingly beautiful as it is deceptively complex. Like Stanley Cavell deliberating the oddly analogous *Days of Heaven*, I wish to understand what ends are served by the 'extremities and successions' of beauty in *São Bernardo*.

To the 'imperfect cinema' proposed and promoted by Cuban filmmaker and theorist Julio Garcia Espinosa in his influential essay 'For an Imperfect Cinema', Hirszman boldly counterposes an impeccable cinema – meticulous, utterly lucid, perspicuous. The film separates visual beauty from the fetishistic voyeurism which underlies the visual pleasure offered by the dominant cinema. The latter, as Laura Mulvey has compellingly argued, is based on 'an illusion cut to the measure of desire'[1] – active *masculine* desire which takes as its object a passive and appropriable image of the female. In a reversal of conventional narrative patterns, *São Bernardo* revolves around and reveals the components of a male protagonist's *in*capacity to win the object of his desire, the wife he acquires and possesses but can neither fathom nor control. The mode of her representation never permits Madalena to become the object of the audience's (voyeuristic) desire, in the same way that the presentation of Paulo Honório precludes his becoming the locus of the audience's identification. Addressing the debate over the positioning of the spectator, and opting for distanciation over identification, Hirszman proposes a theatricalising 'estrangement effect' which leads his audience to an ambiguous frontier between realism and expressionism, modernism and classicism (or a more classical illusionism), pointing beyond (even at the moment of its completion a decade ago) to some looming realm of postmodernism.

THE CONTEXT

São Bernardo appeared at a critical moment in the history of Brazilian film culture and in national political history. In 1964, a 'bloodless' coup d'etat replaced a tradition of democratic government with a military dictatorship which only now, after nearly two decades in power, is inclining toward a certain re-democratisation. With the progressive initiatives of the late fifties and early sixties so summarily blocked, the Cinema Novo movement transferred its focus from the countryside to the city, from the dispossessed to the crucial 'middle sectors' without whose collaboration or acquiescence the military could not have acceded to power so easily. The coup d'etat challenged and further galvanised this group of filmmakers. The very survival of the movement and the physical safety of its members would be severely threatened four years later, with a 'coup within the coup': the infamous Institutional Act Number Five which

suspended all judicial guarantees in order to give the police, military and paramilitary groups a freer hand in the persecution and eradication of 'subversive' elements. From 1968 through the mid-seventies, civil and cultural repression in Brazil was so severe and so widespread that the country became the focus of international censure, singled out by groups like Amnesty International and the Bertrand Russell Tribunal. Some Brazilian cineastes were temporarily jailed, others impelled to 'voluntary' exile. Many of those who remained succumbed to political and economic pressures, suspending their film-making activity until the incipient *Abertura* of the late seventies, along with newly organised state support for film production and distribution, opened up new spaces for creative expression.

Those who did continue making films during those harrowing years skirted the risks of explicit messages by developing an indirect style – anti-realist, highly metaphorical, often hermetic. They set aside the conventions of a neo-realist-inspired aesthetic dedicated to capturing the surface appearance of reality in favour of an often playful, often aggressive excursion into realms of the 'unseen' – unconscious, myths. As Brazilian critic Ismail Xavier has noted, the style that became known as Tropicalism undertook the dissolution of hierarchies and embraced the juxtaposition of heterogeneous cultural contexts through 'strategies of aggression that would provoke a radical sense of estrangement in the audience ... '.[2] At the core of Tropicalist expression is the impulse to allegory, to the systematic presentation of something through the representation of something else.

In a joint essay on *São Bernardo*, Randal Johnson and Robert Stam characterise its appearance as follows:

In the midst of this metaphorical outpouring under harsh military rule, São Bernardo stands out as [an] anomaly for its return to a critical realism in some ways reminiscent of early Cinema Novo.[3]

When viewed in the context other films from 1969-1973, *São Bernardo may* seem like a throwback to an earlier phase of Cinema Novo. But when viewed in the context of the realist films from that earlier phase, or against contemporary films in a realist mode, *São Bernardo* shades into another, singularly non-realistic hue, accentuating its otherness, its status a anomaly, its role as stylistic innovator.[4]

REFUSING THE CINEMATIC: SELECTIVE NEGATION AND DEFERRAL

The question of style cedes place to a more fundamental question: what is the relationship which this particular film established to its own medium? The essential distinction between modernist and classical art stipulates that the former incorporates cognisance of its own necessary conditions, and of its historical relationship to those conditions, into its

[2] Ismail Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment: From the Aesthetics of Hunger to the Aesthetics of Garbage*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1982.

[3] Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, 'Sao Bernardo: Property and the Personality', in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam (eds), *Brazilian Cinema*, East Brunswick, New Jersey, Associated University Presses, 1982, p 201.

[4] At about the same time, a group of equally important but somewhat lesser known films appeared which, in reaction to the excesses of Tropicalist style, engaged in a certain 'de-cinematisation' of the medium through devices like the sequence shot, meticulous *mise-en-scène*, and a return to more classical narrative forms and pacing. These films include *Os inconfidentes* (*The Conspirators*, directed by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1972); *Joanna Francesa* (directed by Carlos Diegues, 1974); and *Licao de amor* (*Love Lesson*, directed by Eduardo Escorel, 1975).

[5] Clement
Greenberg,
'Modernist
Painting', cited in
Stephen Melville,
'Notes on the
Reemergence of
Allegory, the
Forgetting of
Modernism, the
Necessity of
Rhetoric, and the
Conditions of
Publicity in Art and
Criticism', *October*
19, Winter 1981,
p 62.

[6] Michael Fried,
*Absorption and
Theatricality:
Painting and
Beholder in the Age
of Diderot*,
Berkeley,
University of
California Press,
1980, p 89. See also
p 78 for Diderot's
conception of
tableau. Stephen
Melville, op cit, p
69, remarks that
'The "tableau" is
the difficult seam
between the canvas
and the stage.' (In
French, the same
term can refer to
either.) In the case
of *São Bernardo*, I
would argue, the
concept of tableau
also provides a
seam between the
stage and the
screen.

expression. Art may recognise its necessary conditions by 'purifying' itself—that is, by casting outside itself 'any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art';[5] or it may convey its awareness of its necessary conditions by denying or evading them. The latter practice involves a quasi-perverse kind of restraint by which the very infrequency of a technique or device forces us to come to terms with how sorely, indeed, we have been missing it— precisely because of our conviction that it is essential to the medium. The vacuum generated in the absence of these characteristic elements is often filled only by recourse to and incorporation of other artistic media.

São Bernardo is not 'purely' cinematic but very 'impurely' so. It evades or defers those techniques most characteristic of the film medium: camera movement, variation of distance from the subject, and montage. Selectively (never absolutely) withholding these essential mechanisms, *São Bernardo* appeals to the other arts. The forms of representation in the film insistently call up analogies with what are traditionally regarded as the fine arts: painting, architecture, dance (choreography) and, most markedly, theatre.

One interpretation of the history of cinema revolves around film's attempt to extricate itself from its theatrical heritage. *São Bernardo* runs full force in the opposite direction, embracing theatricality in multiple ways and on multiple levels. Except in a very limited and hence privi-leged number of instances, Hirszman here minimises camera movement and montage sequences in favour of the fixed camera, the long shot and the long take, and sequences made up of a markedly limited and discrete number of shots. The spatial relationship to what is being presented (long shot with fixed camera) and the duration of a given image or setting on the screen (long take; sequence shot) 'freeze' the frame into a kind of proscenium, creating static spaces which call our attention to the compo-sition of objects and people within them—to considerations of *ordon-nance*, compositional balance and unity, parallelism to the picture plane versus composition in depth, harmonies of lighting and colour. As in painting, the arrangement of and relationship between the elements within the frame assume primordial importance. Such 'static' spaces are only dynamised by the choreography of movement within them. As in theatre or dance, motion derives primarily from what is being depicted, rather than from the agency of its depiction.

In his account of the movement from Rococo to neo-classical painting in mid-to-late eighteenth century France, Michael Fried concludes that 'the new emphasis on unity and instantaneousness' (which 'marks an epoch in the prehistory of... modern pictoral thought') 'was by its very nature an emphasis on the *tableau*.'[6] Hirszman in *São Bernardo* often expands the single-sequence shot into a series of 'still' compositions shot from varying angles within the same confined space. This consequent effect of stasis, reminiscent of both theatrical and pictorial tableaux, stands in diametrical opposition to the classical technique of 'invisible' or 'continuity' cutting. Though the footage from the various angles is joined in the editing process, the result is not in any conventional sense a

montage because of the insistence with which each of the component shots maintains its individuality.

Hirszman's use of these multiple-shot sequences in which the camera remains motionless, the fact of its (prior and invisible) movement evinced only by a cut and change of angle, privileges composition within the frame because the fact of a new arrangement, rather than the motion of the camera or the characters' own displacement as they interact during the take, offers a kind of 'movement' which is singularly static, and, as a result, also singularly laden with meaning. The deliberateness of the arrangement of characters and objects within these fixed frames makes power hierarchies and any other essentially symbolic information apprehensible to the viewer; the deliberateness of the pacing allows the viewer time to apprehend them.

Among European and American film theorists, and among most Latin American film-makers as well, the sequence-shot is embraced not for its 'theatricality' (its acknowledgement of the presence of the spectator) but for its 'absorptive' potential (its ability to ignore the spectator even while enlisting his/her total attention to what is being depicted). André Bazin, passionate and articulate defender of *mise-en-scène* over montage, believed the unbroken sequence shot closer to perceptual modes of apprehending reality and hence more capable of absorbing the viewer in the reality portrayed. In his essay 'Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema', Bolivian film-maker Jorge Sanjines discusses his group's evolution toward the sequence shot in terms of the quest for a camera style which would 'involve the spectators and enhance their participation'.[7] In the manual-manifesto he prepared for aspiring film-makers under his tutelage in Nicaragua in 1981, Bolivian film-maker, historian and critic Alfonso Gumucio Dagron calls the sequence shot 'the dictatorship of reality' and, more precisely, 'the result of the dictatorship of reality over new film-makers'.[8] Yet here, paradoxically, we have this device used to the opposite end – emphasising its theatricality, its artificiality, its distancing effects, and thus using a 'realist' technique to create an anti-realist effect. The abundance of frames within the proscenic frame (door jambs, window shutters and sills, balustrades, the altar of the church, etc), in addition to accentuating the sense of the characters' entrapment, confront us, the spectators, with our own voyeuristic status. The predominance of long and extreme long shots attenuates that awareness, however, by keeping us at a 'safe' – if at times resented – distance: the distance from which a spectator in the theatre views a play. (Film, in contrast, exercises the confoundingly aggressive prerogative of adjusting the distance between character and spectator arbitrarily and unpredictably.)

São Bernardo is virtually a film without close-ups, and a good deal of its stylistic particularity resides in this anomaly. More exactly, as Vincent Canby has noted, it is a film in which 'close-ups, when they come, often have the shattering effect of unexpected intimacies'.[9] They are shattering precisely because, by removing the threshold markers, they break the theatrical distance which the rest of the film strives to

[7] Jorge Sanjines and El Grupo Ukamau, *Teoria y practica de un cine junto al pueblo*, Mexicô, Siglo XXI, 1979, p 63.

[8] Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, *El cine de los trabajadores*, Managua, Taller de Cine Super 8, Central Sandanista de Trabajadores, 1981, pp 71-73.

[9] Vincent Canby, 'Sao Bernardo, Brazilian Morality Play', the *New York Times*, September 8 1980.

[10] By Hirszman's account, the music is inspired by the *rojão de eito*, a regional work song, generally a duet. (*Rojão* : a dragging along the ground of an object or the sound so produced; the slow playing of a fiddle; a forced march; a long stretch of work. *Eito*: hoeing of land by a gang of slaves.) Composer Caetano Veloso improvised the music during the projection of the completed film. See Leon Hirszman, 'Entrevista II' (interviewed by Federico de Cardenas) in Isaac Leon Frias, *Los años de la conmocion, 1967-1973: Entrevistas con realizadores sudamericanos*, Mexico, UNAM, *Cuadernos de cine* 28, 1979, p 139.

[11] Hirszman's own way of characterising his project in *São Bernardo* corroborates and also expands this point. As he explained in the interview cited in the previous note, 'My work was primarily based on two considerations – distancing relations and organic unity; but, at the same time, all this has a lot to do with a kind of musical structuration' (p 137). And 'We

create and preserve. They are shattering because they transport us, however briefly, back into a more characteristically filmic mode, bringing us at last face to face with a character whose features we have by now resigned ourselves to never being able to examine at close range.

In its impulse to reopen the film medium to the other arts, one key medium is as selectively denied within *São Bernardo* as the essential elements of filmic language themselves. Music in the film is sparse by any standards, its general absence investing its occasional presence with heightened intensity and impact. Though written by Caetano Veloso, one of Brazil's leading composers, the score of *São Bernardo* consists of music so reduced to the barest essentials, so 'primitive' as to stretch the notion of film score to the breaking point. The strains of a guitar are heard once, for a few seconds, but otherwise the only instrument is the human voice, in duet and trio, shaping sounds which are so non-Western in rhythm, cadence and tonal quality that they seem almost otherworldly.[10]

Orchestration in *São Bernardo* is not to be found on the level of musical accompaniment, but instead embraces all the visual and aural elements in a quest for complex harmonies of sound and image.[11] It is this confluence of harmonies, so painstakingly and deliberately constructed, that lies at the root of the film's pervasive, haunting, 'classical' beauty. Nothing in the presentation of representation here is spontaneous: the consciousness of frame and position within the frame, the clarity of outline, the use of multiple planes in parallel relationshp to the picture plane, the coordination of colours, the creation of an almost palpable luminosity. By the same token, nothing in this film is extraneous; nothing is dissonant – except to the degree that dissonance functions to enhance the overall harmony of the whole. The result is a film which demands reflection upon itself and its procedures without being self-referential in the conventional modernist sense. It acknowledges and meditates upon its own filmicity not through the explicit presence of the camera made visible by another invisible camera, or by a film-within-the-film, or by related devices which became so common in the late sixties, but instead through the avoidance and deferral of stylistic resources essential to the medium and through the compensatory incorporation of references to and procedures from the other arts.

'IMPERFECT' VERSUS 'IMPECCABLE' CINEMA

It is in relation to this particular aspect that *São Bernardo* takes a staunch stand against the most hotly debated theoretical issue of its time on the Latin American film scene. Its formal and technical perfection stand in antithetical relationship to the ideas put forth in Julio Garcia Espinosa's famous essay, 'For an Imperfect Cinema' (1970), which begins 'Nowadays perfect cinema – technically and artistically masterful – is almost always reactionary cinema. The major temptation facing Cuban cinema at this time ... is precisely that of transforming itself into a perfect cinema.' If Hirszman and Garcia Espinosa share the same Brechtian pre-

occupation — in the latter's words 'What can be done so that the audience stops being an object and transforms itself into the subject?' — the paths they designate lead in opposite directions. Garcia Espinosa maintains that 'Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in quality or technique, ... in predetermined taste, and much less in "good taste". It is not quality which it seeks in an artist's work.' The Cuban proposes 'process' over 'analysis': 'To analyze a problem is to show the problem (not the process) permeated with judgments which the analysis itself generates a priori. ... To show the process of a problem, on the other hand, is to submit it to judgment without pronouncing the verdict.' The kind of film-making he defends 'is thus the opposite of a ... self-sufficient and contemplative cinema, the opposite of a cinema which "beautifully illustrates" ideas or concepts which we already possess.' And finally, 'Imperfect cinema cannot lose sight of the fact that its essential goal as a new poetics is to disappear.' [12]

Hirszman's practice, in contrast, proposes the all-pervasive organic unity of the work of art, down to a 'cromophonic ... union between color and sound, or color and phoneme'. [13] This impulse to the perfect integration of all elements into an artistic whole harks back to older critical prescriptions — to the France of the Enlightenment, for example, when Denis Diderot and other critics of contemporary painting called for 'an absolutely perspicuous mode of pictorial unity, one in which the causal necessity of every element and relationship in the painting would be strikingly and instantaneously apparent'. [14] The lucidity Hirszman seeks is only attainable at the price of surrendering spontaneity and improvisation (so essential to 'imperfect' cinemas) to an utterly premeditated coherence in which even the 'merely' formal aspects of every figure, every sign, every code offer themselves as meanings to be read.

IMPLICATIONS OF THEATRICALITY

In trying to comprehend and articulate Hirszman's project in *São Bernardo*, and in particular the levels and implications of its theatricality, I am intrigued by the potential parallels in the history of the plastic arts, as synthesised below, for example, by Stephen Melville with liberal quotations from Douglas Crimp:

The claim we are considering is that 'over the past decade we have witnessed a radical break with the modernist tradition, effected precisely by a preoccupation with the "theatrical."' On this account, the break with modernism has been effected through a shattering of the 'integrity of modernist painting and sculpture' which makes it 'clear that the actual characteristics of the medium, per se, cannot any longer tell us much about an artist's activity.' This obliteration of boundaries has opened art's way to theater and its privileged experience of temporality. [15]

'What "theatricality" has been naming all along,' concludes Melville, 'is

always elaborated color and sound together, in relation to one another, never independently. This was our basic tenet' (p 140).

[12] Julio Garcia Espinosa, 'For an Imperfect Cinema' (my translation) in *Jump Cut* 20, 1979, pp 24-26.

[13] Leon Hirszman, op cit, p 137.

[14] Michael Fried, op cit, p 76.

[15] Stephen Melville, op cit, p 79.

[16] ibid, p 67.

[17] Fredric Jameson, 'On Post-Modernism', provisional title of paper delivered November 4 1982 at Miami University of Ohio, courtesy of the author.

[18] cited in Stephen Melville, op cit, p 80.

[19] James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp 147-180.

the inevitability of distance.'[16] The 'impurity' of Hirszman's use of the film medium in *São Bernardo*, his deliberate 'contamination' of it through the incorporation of the other arts, combined with his reassertion of the presence (and distance) of the spectator, align him with the post-modernist stance as described in the quote which opens this section. Fredric Jameson's current work on the post-modernist phenomenon is also relevant here. Using photorealism as a paradigm for much of post-modernist art as he defines it, Jameson describes it as a style that

... looked like a return to representation after the anti-representational abstractions of abstract expressionism, until people began to realize that these paintings are not exactly realistic either, since what they represent is not the outside world, but rather only a photograph of the outside world, or in other words, the latter's image. False realisms, they are really art about other art, images of other images.[17]

Like the post-modernist painting of the photorealists, the deceptiveness of *São Bernardo*'s apparent realism is related to its constitution of itself as a set of images of other images. Douglas Crimp has observed that a great deal of contemporary painting involves 'the presentation of an event in such a manner and at such a distance that it is apprehended as representation – representation, not, however, conceived as re-presentation of that which is prior, but as the unavoidable condition of intelligibility of that which is present'.[18] Through *São Bernardo*, as we have noted, Hirszman deliberates both re-presentation and representation.

CHARACTERISING MODES OF REPRESENTATION

In *How to Read a Film*, James Monaco outlines the following major codes within the static frame: aspect ratio; open and closed form; frame, geographic and depth planes; depth perception; proximity and proportion; intrinsic interest of colour, form and line; weight and direction; latent expectation; oblique versus symmetric composition; texture and lighting. He designates distance, focus, angle, movement and point of view as the dynamic codes.[19] A thorough study of differing modes of character representation within a specific film would need to begin by addressing each of these elements. I will be concentrating here, however, on a more limited number: movement, proximity, and *ordonnance* of characters; the presence or absence of direct eye contact with the camera; lighting; camera angle; length of shot and rhythms and symmetries of shots both within particular sequences and within the film as a whole. In an earlier section, I summarised the most striking characteristics of the film's overall visual style. Here I will examine telling variations in style which appear to be coded to the presentation of three key figures: Paulo Honório, Madalena, and the fieldhands of São Bernardo who, I will argue, take on the force of a collective protagonist/antagonist at the end of the film.

Because his is an autobiographical narrative, Paulo Honório is the only character in the film granted the privilege of self-presentation. As the informing consciousness, he dominates both image and soundtrack. Some 50 sequences pivot around his presence; only a bare handful are presented without his aural or visual trace. Madalena, on contrast, present in less than half that number of sequences, only appears some ten times in the frame without the visual presence of Paulo Honório. Furthermore, during a number of these instances, her visual 'autonomy' is undercut by Paulo Honório's voice-over. His oral self-presentation is further layered by the various possibilities of synchronous sound, voice-over, and a combination of the two, as in the early sequence when we simultaneously hear his diegetic response (heightened anger) and his supra-diegetic, temporally distanced assessment.

São Bernardo is visually organised around recurring shots/sequences of Paulo Honório seated at a table, pen and paper before him, reflecting on the events of his life. This table, situated in the dining room at São Bernardo, serves as a kind of shifting signifier, denoting movement forward and backward in time, connoting Paulo Honório's changing fortunes and living arrangements by whether and how it is laid, and who is seated at it. Paulo Honório appears seated alone at this table some ten times in the course of the film. The *mise-en-scène* of these shots undergoes constant variation: the table is covered with a white cloth, or it is bare; the lighting is *chiaroscuro* or the scene is backlit through a bank of octagonal windows; the objects which integrate the composition change.

Throughout these variations, however, painterly codes prevail. Composition tends to be in a single plane parallel to the frame, as in a limited number of other shots which emphasise reflectiveness, rather than enlisting the multiple planes or composition in depth of other, action sequences. There is little movement in these scenes at the table; the stasis emphasises the portrait-like nature of the shots. The periodic incorporation of (self)portraiture as leitmotiv is logical in a film which attempts to re-theatricalise the process of viewing (in a medium which traditionally permits us to view its world unseen) since, in Michael Fried's terms, portraiture is inherently 'theatrical' in its self-conscious exhibition of its subject to public gaze. It is consistent with the film's dynamic play with polarities that the most quintessentially 'absorptive' postures are chosen for these portrait sequences — postures in which the very inwardness of the subject's attention negates the awareness of a beholder which the fact of portraiture implies. Staring into space, endeavouring to write, falling asleep over a blank page are poses which also occur in several paintings selected to illustrate Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot.*[20]

Paulo Honório begins to narrate the events of his life with a disclaimer ('None of this story is ordered.') spoken not in synch but in voice-over. The distance created by the disjunction between (silent) image and

[20] Michael Fried, op cit. See especially figures 2, 6 and 13.

(overlaid) sound both ruptures illusionism and effectively negates the truth of the statement. The claim to unpremeditated spontaneity is disingenuous at best, since it, like every other aspect of the film which it introduces, will be seen to have been meticulously ordered.

The camera cuts to a blank white wall. Paulo Honório inserts his head into the frame, in a rare close-up which enlists photographic rather than painterly codes, modern rather than classical associations. His voice-over here alludes to another kind of distortion of the truth, raising the issue of his own reliability as a narrator: 'If I tried to tell you about my child-hood, I would have to lie.'

The first and longer of the three montage sequences in the film pro-vides an eleven-shot recapitulation of the protagonist's past. The fifth shot (Paulo Honório at a town fair) uses a mobile camera, a device sel-dom enlisted in the representation of this character. The final shot, an encounter between Paulo Honório and the drunken Padilha, dissolute heir to the decaying São Bernardo plantation, introduces theatrical codes through its extremely artificial, almost expressionistic lighting. This theatricality is fully developed in the next sequence, an encounter between the same pair on the site of one of the plantation's ruined build-ings. Camera angles, lighting, the disposition of figures within the frame and their angle of relationship to each other and to the camera all make this outdoor setting disconcertingly stage-like. Their conversation is the first synchronous dialogue in the film, but the tableau effect undermines any sense of verisimilitude.

A landscape shot provides the link to the next sequence, one of the two most formally intricate and narratively pivotal in the film. From the rain-masked hills in extreme long shot, a figure on horseback approaches. In six subsequent interior shots, each from a different angle of the same barren room where Padilha has been sleeping in his hammock, each sustained for some time, Paulo Honório lays his claim to São Bernardo and brow-beats Padilha into acquiescing to his terms. In this and subsequent sequences, Hirszman uses alternately high and low angles in the repre-sentation of his protagonist, as if to break the inclination to identification which more normative angles encourage.

A flash forward to a renovated São Bernardo in long shot, looking inex-plicably more like a stage set than an actual location, brings us out of the remote and into the more recent past. It is at this point in the narrative that two significant representational changes occur: first, the protagon-ist's deferred entry into scenes which have already begun without him marks the beginnings of the erosion of his power (later he will also exit the frame 'prematurely' while the camera holds on action which contin-ues without him); second, the *mise-en-scène* begins to emphasise spatial confinement. The shot of Paulo Honório's cronies on the veranda of the *casa grande* discussing Madalena's attributes introduces both these devi-ces. An oblique camera angle produces the sensation that the columns of the balustrade converge with the wall of the house. In the succeeding shot, the same group is photographed *through* the columns, as if behind bars. The use of parallel and converging planes in both instances creates

a sense of entrapment which will become a persistent visual motif indicating how Paulo Honório is constricted by the possessions he has struggled so unscrupulously to acquire.

Continuity cutting, shot-reverse-shot sequences, and point-of-view shots are all anomalous rather than normative in this film. The latter are used to mark the turning point in Paulo Honório's relationship to Madalena. A dinner table conversation in which she ventures progressive political ideas to Paulo Honório's associates becomes the pretext for his political and moral suspicions of her. As he wonders 'What can they be talking about?', the camera cuts to Madalena conversing with the grey-haired lawyer, though Paulo Honório's voice-over ranting prevents us from distinguishing the actual content of the pair's exchange. It is here that another stylistic component of Paulo Honório's mode of representation appears: the horizon line begins to destabilise, slanting downward in these and a number of succeeding shots of him to connote his increasing disequilibrium. In this pivotal nine-shot sequence, Paulo Honório has grown progressively more visually and aurally isolated: from initial long shots of him seated at the centre of the table presiding over eight diners, through the medium shots of him drinking coffee with some of the guests, to medium close-ups of him seated alone under an oval wedding portrait, 'spying' on Madalena's obviously innocent conversation, himself sealed off in the voice-over articulation of his own tortured suspicions.

Toward the end of the film, Hirszman employs a series of stylistic devices not previously associated with Paulo Honório's mode of representation. After the shot-in-the-dark sequence in which he fires at imagined lovers lurking outside the bedroom window, there is a long shot of him descending from a sunrise stroll in the hills, savouring his own wealth and power and 'at peace with God'. Though his approach toward the stationary camera is extremely gradual, his advance eventually obliterates the image altogether. His discovery of a stray page of a 'letter to a man' in Madalena's handwriting is accompanied by a parallel tracking shot which keeps pace with his pauses and reverses. A vertiginous hand-held camera is used only once, as Paulo Honório rushes down the corridor toward the knowledge of Madalena's suicide. The final choker close-up provides the visual correlative to his own voice-over recognition of his essential monstrosity.

Illumination for Paulo Honório came early in the film, in the quick montage sequence summarising the events of his life before São Bernardo. It is connoted by two white outs: a tilt to the sun which temporarily washes the landscape off the screen, and a tilt to a lightbulb which has a similar effect. In the former instance, the landscape returns to fill the frame; the latter fades into a shot of Paulo Honório scrutinising a *cruzeiro* note under the lightbulb's glare. Property and capital are thus suggested as his 'guiding lights'.

With Madalena's suicide, Paulo Honório is increasingly enveloped in darkness. After he finds the missing pages of the letter which motivated their last confrontation and realises that *he* was in fact its destinatory,

21 It is in this connection that the name of the plantation which gives title to both the novel and the film reveals a latent symbolism. Associated with contemplativeness, St Bernard replaces Beatrice as Dante's guide in the Empyrean realm of pure spirit and clarity once the veil of Dante's temporary blindness has been lifted. As the motor of his obsessive acquisitiveness, São Bernardo plantation occasions Paulo Honório's blindness. His relentless concentration on commodities blinds him to the human factor, making him a 'materialist' in the basest sense. São Bernardo plantation is also the site of introspection, once the death of the woman who represented the humane, reflexive and spiritual in his life has rent the veil of his self-imposed blindness.

darkness engulfs him and the screen goes black. In an attempt to dispel the blackness, he lights a match and stares at it as collective singing emerges on the soundtrack. Abruptly, he blows out the flame, engulfing himself and the screen in darkness again – a darkness emblematic of his blindness, his emptiness, his moral isolation.

The film will end with another, more gradual, more final fade to black as Paulo Honório fades off to sleep, to temporary oblivion, to nothingness. He is no longer blind in the same sense as before, since the preceding montage (discussed below in 'Modes of Representation III: The Fieldhands') indicates that he has seen the world around him clearly for the first time, and is unable to change: 'If it were possible to start all over again, everything would happen just the way it happened. I don't succeed in changing myself, and that's what most afflicts me.'[21]

MODE OF REPRESENTATION II: MADALENA

In the introduction of secondary characters, *São Bernardo* is casual almost to the point of negligence. In both film and novel, Paulo Honório, in his capacity as narrator, sees no need to introduce the lawyer Nogueira or the accountant Ribeira; they are simply part of the furniture of his existence.

Madalena is the only character whose appearance on the screen, long deferred, is assiduously prepared beforehand. With Paulo Honório, we overhear his associates discussing Madalena's physical attributes as they lounge on the veranda of the *casa grande*. Paulo Honório later paces before the altar of the church he has built to cement his position as pious public citizen, considering marriage for the first time. Soon afterwards, a chance meeting with Madalena's aunt, *dona* Gloria, on a train provides Paulo Honório (and us) with the opportunity to learn about more fundamental aspects of this intriguing personage: her profession, her history, her character. (Significantly, the scene in the novel where he sees her at a social gathering at his lawyer's house and is captivated by her beauty is omitted from the film.)

After this ample prologue, we are almost as anxious as Paulo Honório to meet Madalena face to face. Though his desire is fulfilled as he descends from the train to find the schoolteacher awaiting her aunt, ours is not, since the camera only registers Madalena in extreme long shot from the side. We do not abandon hope of assessing, for example, whether her legs are as shapely as her admirers have claimed, but the uncooperative camera, though it follows the trio as they walk from the station, insists on tracking from behind. The atypical mobility of the camera here only enhances our frustration. Already mobilised, it *could* move in closer to the object of our interest, even isolating her from her human and environmental contexts, but instead it stubbornly maintains an over-prudent decorum.

Paulo Honório's courtship and proposal of marriage to Madalena afford us the opportunity of seeing her at closer range in the more intimate space of her sitting room. The first cut which registers her individ-

uality occurs just after Paulo Honório, awkwardly adjusting his position on the wicker settee, draws closer to her chair in order to concede; 'I am clearly not the man of your dreams.' Despite the fact that it is another two shot, we perceive the immediate cut to Madalena standing at the window frame as the first close-up of her because it allows us greater proximity than any previous shot. In the stylistic context of a less circumspect director, however, this would be read as merely a medium shot. Furthermore, Madalena does not make eye contact with the camera, but instead looks off – dreamy-eyed, remote, essentially inscrutable. She is not an object to be easily apprehended, either by Paulo Honório or by the viewer through the agency of the camera. (The caged bird between the couple in this same shot suggests that for Madalena their imminent union will be a form of entrapment.)

As if somehow repentant of its relative spatial intimacy with Madalena in these scenes which take place at her tiny cottage, the camera seems to draw back once she and her aunt take up residence at São Bernardo. This distance is reasserted in the shot which denotes that the marriage has taken place. Standing side by side but apart on the veranda of the *casa grande*, dressed in unprecedented finery, the couple appear in medium long shot from the back, surveying the expanse of the plantation. They approach each other and clasp hands as Madalena says, 'A new life begins for us.'

Madalena's explorations of the *fazenda* are presented in extreme long shot. The brief image of her wandering through cotton fields in her wedding dress is the first instance of total visual autonomy since previously her presence on the screen has been visually dependent upon that of Paulo Honório. The subsequent shot of her at the cotton gin both emphasises her isolation, her lack of place, and aurally undermines her newfound visual autonomy through the overlay of Paulo Honório's musings about her. As the film progresses, she gradually attains more visual autonomy, entering and exiting from the frame with less dependence upon Paulo Honório's disposition. He continues to undermine her aural autonomy, however, rendering her barely audible discussions with Nogueira or Padilha unintelligible by the overlay of his own suspicions.

After Madalena has become the undeserving target of Paulo Honório's obsessive jealousy, their efforts to extinguish the conflicts which flare up between them grow less frequent and more futile. A kind of climax in the crisis is connoted by another shot which registers Madalena's response in an isolation which, though from a medium range, reads as a close-up. Paulo Honório, fearing that Madalena is as liberal with her body as she is in her ideas, suspecting her of being both a communist and an adulteress, appears on his knees rifling through the contents of Madalena's wardrobe. He is in the centre of the frame, flanked by two images of her – one actual and one mirrored – seated, passively weeping. In a startling departure from its habitual stasis, the camera rediscovers its mobility in the next shot, tracking Madalena at relatively close range as she makes her way through a passage constricted by walls and doorways at competing angles, finally coming to rest her head against a wall, a look of anguish on her face.

[22] Vincent Canby, op cit.

In his review of *São Bernardo*, Vincent Canby praised the actress who plays Madalena in the following manner:

> *Isabel Ribeiro... is an extraordinary screen presence. With her long, angular, equine facial features, her stoop-shouldered way of walking, ... and her frumpy clothes, she's anything but a beauty, but the face is one of those remarkable reflecting surfaces that must delight any film director. With seemingly no effort, it responds to everything around it, but in ambiguous ways that absorb our interest. Close-ups were invented for such a face.*[22]

Isabel Ribeiro, who plays Madalena, in a production still from *São Bernardo*.

If close-ups are indeed the ideal mode of representation for such a face, are we to take it as definitive proof of Hirszman's perversity that by his own accounting, in the entire film he grants this actress *only one*? His forbearance inevitably invests that sole occasion with unparalleled impact. As the film progresses, Hirszman, like a zealous *duenna*, allows his camera only a gradually incremental approximation to Madalena. This enforced distance is both complemented and partially compensated by Madalena's passivity, her relative immobility within shots in contrast to the more restlessly active presence of her husband. In paradoxical

contrast to Paulo Honório and other characters, Madalena's passivity seems to elicit more movement from this predominantly static camera. Hirszman discusses his extreme restraint in the use of camera movement and close-ups in the following terms:

*... I held myself back many times so that when I was confronted with the need for movement, it would be more intensely **experienced** as such. When I approach Madalena, it is only at the moment immediately prior to the last shot in which she will appear alive, in that sequence in the church when she is presented in close-up. Before that, she had never been shot in close-up.*[23]

[23] Leon Hirszman, op cit, p 138.

The church sequence he alludes to is one of the two most striking in the film. That the segment which centres upon Madalena is the most highly invested of her appearances is conveyed through the conjunction of movement and close-up. Seated side by side on a church pew, his anger momentarily dispelled by her tranquil detachment, the couple begin a conversation that becomes less a dialogue than two independent monologues. Paulo Honório suggests that they go away together after the harvest, but she ignores his overture, having already decided to 'go away' in another, more final sense. As if finally compelled to opt for one term in the face of this disjunction, the camera here (and this is the only instance in the entire film) forces Paulo Honório out of the frame as it tracks in, centres and holds in full close-up on Madalena, who continues her solemn and disjointed soliloquy about her life before Paulo Honório. The relentless correspondence between what is presented in the film and Paulo Honório's informing presence, essential to this autobiographical mode, is here broken – a violation of an essential unity of conception for the sake of one privileged moment in which the nature of the image represented conveys infinitely more meaning than the words the character speaks.

When Madalena exits the church, leaving her drowsy and uncomprehending husband to stretch out obliviously on the pew, she is momentarily transfixed by light from an invisible source to one side of the nave. The red hues of her dress and shawl glow in the surrounding penumbra as if they contained their own source of illumination. Her figure – again shot from the back, in long shot, a visual echo of her first appearance in the film – now floats, momentarily suspended on a higher plane within the frame. Never more ethereal, the singing begins again here, an accompaniment to Madalena's 'ascension'. Her shawl, first a dowdy drapery which concealed her body from our curious gaze, always a potential shroud, is here metamorphosed – as she extends it to wrap herself more tightly against the night air – into the equivalent of angels' wings. She is not only out of her husband's sight and beyond his grasp, but beyond (above) his mortal comprehension.

While Paulo Honório is associated with *chiaroscuro* lighting – an essentially expressionistic code which effectively emphasises his isolation, his lack of clarity and clairvoyance – Madalena's image is illuminated with consistently 'natural' light. Her representation throughout the film

[24] Laura Mulvey, op cit, p 13.

constitutes a rejection of and an alternative to traditional appropriative portrayals. The plot of *São Bernardo* turns the standard show girl story inside out. As Laura Mulvey describes this narrative prototype:

> ... *the film opens with the woman as object of the combined gaze of spectator and all male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualized. But as the narrative progresses, she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property...; her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too.*[24]

Hirszman instead gives us a deglamourised, desexualised heroine, whom he refuses to put on display, deferring her initial appearance, then presenting her from a distance and within a larger human and environmental context that blocks attempts to isolate her as an object of contemplation and voyeuristic or fetishistic pleasure. Only in the 'ascension' sequence can Madalena be viewed as an icon on display, but she is here the antithesis of the conventional icon of female sexuality, connoting instead elevation to the realm of the metaphysical. Not only is she no longer subject to the gaze of the male protagonist (though still in the spectators' line of vision); she is about to definitively elude his control. It is problematic that the price of her independence is her suicide. It is also problematic that her characterisation resorts to a traditional spiritualisation of the female in contrast to a baser male principle. Yet the film does not end without positing a third, synthetic term to resolve this opposition.

MODE OF REPRESENTATION III:
THE FIELDHANDS

Though Madalena was unable to dispel Paulo Honório's self-imposed blindness during their lifetime together, her suicide compels him to view the world with new eyes. The immediate objects of this transformed vision are the farm labourers who have been virtually invisible (though not inaudible) up to this point. Following the second blackout is a succession of shots of workers in the fields and in front of their miserable dwellings – a montage which echoes but reaches far beyond an earlier sequence representing workers' activities (stonecutting, painting, hoeing singly or in pairs) as simply another phase in the consolidation of Paulo Honório's wealth, subsequent to his acquisition of the property, his disposal of his boundary-jealous neighbour, and his enlistment of the Vicar's blessing, and prior to his decision to marry. The final and qualitatively different montage begins with a landscape in long shot. The presence of the fieldhands deep in the frame is at first indicated only by a little cloud of dust raised by their hoeing. Gradually a dozen fieldhands work their way up the dirt-covered hillock closest to the foreground, singing. The work songs which have sporadically provided an abstract and at times almost ethereal accompaniment to various kinds of sequences in the film are here for the first time fully united with both

their source and their motivation. The uninterrupted use of music here spans more cuts than in any other sequence in the film.

In an earlier shot, Paulo Honório descended these same hillsides, heady with a beatific sense of his own power based on possession and control:

When ... we see at our feet immense herds and extensive plantations, all ours; and we see the smoke rising from the houses that belong to us, where people live who fear us, respect us, perhaps even love us because they are dependent on us, we experience a deep feeling of serenity. We feel ourselves to be good; we feel ourselves to be strong. ... And so it was that I descended at peace with God.

The successive representations of the fieldhands in this final montage involve a different directionality. As they sing and toil in unison, the fieldhands' movement is invariably ascendant.

The dramatic contrast between these images of social labour and the contrapuntal shots of Paulo Honório at his dimly lit table, solitary and recalcitrant, is made even more marked by subsequent shots in the field-hand montage. Images of social labour (no solitary toilers here) cede to images of social life as a mud hut fills the frame and people of all ages and both sexes spill out from its door and window. The camera cuts to a close-up of a woman's face framed in a doorway, half in shadow, looking directly at the camera, and then to a mulatto child whose glance is as wayward as his abundant curls. His eyes shift because he is fully aware of being photographed. He looks at the camera, looks away, looks back again, all the while holding himself very still.

This montage of peasants and their families at work and at rest consti-tutes a different mode of representation within this film. The immediate iconographic reference is the tradition of ethno-political documentary realism, heir to post-war Italian neo-realism, first practised in Latin America in films like the Argentine *Tire dié* (*Toss Me a Dime*, directed by Fernando Birri, 1956) and generalised throughout Latin America in the succeeding decade. The central difference underlying this altered mode of representation involves two polarities: distance and proximity, acting and being. With this montage, *São Bernardo* departs the realm of art and artifice for a more palpable, temporalised realism. The contrast which these images establish with those that preceded them demands a recon-sideration of the meaning of every prior image.

Here Paulo Honório is confronted with the futility of his own quest to confer retroactive meaning onto his life and thus salvage a future through the ordering of words on a page. In the final juxtaposition between the landlord and those 'untamed beasts and wild ones' who toil for him, the individual so painstakingly portrayed is revealed (to us and to himself) in all his bestiality, while the anonymous human supports of his dehuman-ising system claim a presence both immediate and enduring.

Paulo Honório's final realisation of the difference between his idea of his workers and their actual being, and between his idea of himself and his own actual being ('I did not dream of becoming the fierce exploiter

that I have become. I think I lost my way.') confronts him with two alter-
natives: transformation or annihilation. 'I can't imagine changing
myself, and that is what disturbs me most of all,' he murmurs as his
weary head collapses onto the table. In the extreme close-up of his
inclined face, which gradually gathers the darkness as the waning candle
flickers out, only his gold wedding band struggles to defy the relentless
blackness which, eventually, engulfs it too.

MADALENA AS 'BRIDGE'

Thus Madalena's mode of representation, despite a certain consonance
with Paulo Honório's, differs in significant aspects, whereas the mode of
representation of the fieldhands and their offspring is of an altogether
different nature, characterised by its frontality, by direct eye contact, by
'interactional' proximity as opposed to 'theatrical' distance between
camera and subject, by the simplicity and lack of obvious artifice in the
mise-en-scène.

One sequence not previously discussed establishes a direct narrative
and visual linkage between these different modes of representation. The
subsequent sequence, equally important, stands out as an anomaly, a
deception.

The former begins with the elaborately choreographed sequence in
which Paulo Honório assaults his fieldhand Marciano (the only labourer
to be given a name and minimal degree of characterisation in the film),
and is then stunned to find himself the recipient of Madalena's revulsion
and reprobation. The plank bridge which both links and separates the
couple as they face each other from opposite sides of the stream is an
emblem of the fragility and make-shift nature of the connection between
them. This scene marks the place where their increasingly manifest
differences widen into an unbreachable gulf. Paulo Honório's attempt to
dissimulate through conversational pleasantries so uncharacteristic of
him ('Getting some fresh air?') is met first with silence and eventually
with an outraged 'It's horrible!' A train whistles in the background,
intensifying the silence, recalling the origins of their association, and
alluding to the characters' geographical confinement. The scene ends
with the first glimmer of a jealousy whose obsessive intensity will event-
ually blind the landowner. 'What do you care about Marciano?' is not a
question; it is an accusation.

The following sequence finds Paulo Honório seated frontally at his
table, his clasped hands flanked by ink box and blank paper. Meditative,
he stares into the camera, as the sound of the clock punctuates the silence
like water dripping from a leaky tap. A reverse shot reveals Madalena
sitting opposite him, 'mirroring' him with her clasped hands, her frontal
posture, her matched distance from the camera and (the only instance of)
her direct eye contact. In the third and final shot of this brief sequence,
the camera has moved off and back for a view of the entire table. This
shot reveals not the pair of them, but Paulo Honório seated alone. The
long shot, the *chiaroscuro* lighting, and the absence of any aural accom-

paniment accentuate his isolation and inertia: his neglect of even the
clock has rendered it too absolutely silent

25 Stephen Melville,
op cit, p 59.

This sequence is *sui generis*. It tricks the viewer not once, but twice.
The first frontal shot of Paulo Honório staring directly into the camera
incorporates us as spectators into the space of representation. We engage
his look, assuming it is indeed directed at us. The countershot reveals
Madalena in the same posture, with the result that we revise our assess-
ment, concluding that the direct eye contact of both protagonists with
the camera does not incorporate but rather excludes us as spectators:
they are looking at each other. The third shot reveals this to be yet
another misconception – an illusion. Paulo Honório is alone in the room.
Madalena's fleeting presence is only imaginary, a projection of his guilt,
an anticipation of her impending and final absence. So briefly re-
embodied, she speaks a single sentence. The charity of her nature (which
contrasts so directly with Paulo Honório's immersion in an exclusively
selfish calculus), her concern with the humanity and suffering of those
whom her husband views as mere instruments of his accumulation, is
conveyed in her simple exhortation, 'We must help Senhor Caetano.'

THE ALLEGORICAL DIMENSION(S)

Reflecting on the historical self-consciousness of modernism, Stephen
Melville contends that 'an age whose relation to its past has become
problematic ... will be led to find and guarantee itself and its work
through detour and delay – works and devices of indirection, complex
barriers to and recoveries of presence'.[25] The relationship to history is
nowhere more problematic than under a dictatorship, particularly a *new*
dictatorship. In this sense, Leon Hirszman's project is fully, inevitably
consonant with those of his immediate contemporaries whose films are
more identifiably part of the Tropicalist movement. All must necessarily
appeal to indirection, to allegory, if they are to communicate at all. *São
Bernardo* differs from other films of the period in that its allegorical
dimension is dual: historical and formal. In the conclusion to their essay
on the film, Johnson and Stam address the former dimension in their
discussion of the correspondences between events and personalities
depicted in *São Bernardo*, and specifically local as well as universal
conditions:

*While São Bernardo on one level makes a universal statement about the
relations between property and personality, on another it makes a very speci-
fic statement about Brazil. The property São Bernardo is a microcosm of
Brazil, and although the story is set in the late twenties, its social and econo-
mic structures resemble those of Brazil in the early seventies. ... Paulo, not
unlike Brazil's military rulers at the time the film was made, comes to power
through force and intimidation, bribery and murder. He practices arbitrary
rule ('I don't have to explain anything to anybody!') and censorship (he rifles
through Madalena's books and papers). Hysterically anti-communist and
physically violent, he forms a kind of grotesque double of the military regime
in Brazil. Furthermore, São Bernardo was made at a time when there was*

[26] Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, op cit, p 207.

[27] Stephen Melville, op cit, p 80.

[28] Leon Hirszman, op cit, p 135.

[29] ibid.

[30] ibid.

[31] ibid, p 138.

[32] It is germane to the thematics of *São Bernardo* that Michael Fried, op cit, p 70, concludes his chapter on 'The Primacy of Absorption' with a discussion of two canvases (by Chardin and Greuze) which use the theme of blindness as 'the basis for a narrative-dramatic structure which ... asserts the primacy of absorption'.

much talk in the international press of the Brazilian 'economic miracle.' The film exposes the miracle for what it was: a cruel deception. Paulo rises economically by a kind of miracle, but the miracle benefits only himself, just as the Brazilian economic miracle enriched an elite few at the expense of the oppressed majority. If São Bernardo is, as Leon Hirszman claims, a 'concrete analysis of a concrete situation,' the terms of its analysis can be extended from a plantation in the twenties to present-day Brazil as a whole.[26]

The formal dimension of allegory has to do with the way the film foregrounds issues of presentation and representation. To cite Melville again, 'It is this presentation of representation, this insistence on surrendering presence – of any kind – to its permeation by something other than itself, that lies at the heart of what is now being called "allegory".'[27]

Hirszman himself cautions against interpreting Paulo Honório's trajectory in concrete sociological terms as 'a realistic [narrative] which corresponds to sociological relations like those which can be determined through surveys'.[28] Despite the fact that Ramos based his character on two fellow residents of Alagoas, whom he knew personally, Hirszman believes that 'Graciliano leaves the realm of the individual case and goes to the universal, returning later to that singular case which is the protagonist, Paulo Honório.'[29] For Hirszman, the essence of the character's story is emblematic: 'You have to see it as a modulation of the relations of economic reification.' He continues,

This is the axis of the novel, according to which the character undergoes a process of ongoing modification in relation to his process of accumulation, because Paulo Honório himself, at a given moment, is already presented as an object. His being is entirely absorbed by another totality, economic reification. ... This is the axis which traverses the character and controls him at the same time that he controls, or thinks he controls, his own actions, which allows us to discover another dialectic.[30] (my italics)

Given the terms of this analysis, it is singularly interesting that Hirszman sees the fact and the representation of *absorption* as integral to his rendering of what might be called the dialectic of the objectification of the subject through objects of his own acquisition. The particular significance of this connection is reinforced by Hirszman's belief that the original novel is characterised by dialectics of contradictory relationships, and by his commitment to maintain them in his filmed adaptation. For Hirszman, dialectics lie at the core of both meaning and the representation of meaning. He states quite categorically, 'I believe only in praxis and the dialectic. We live on [and off, and from] contradiction, which is universal, and present in everything.'[31]

If dialectics are, as Hirszman desires and believes, at the core of this film, a core dialectic resides in his presentation of an 'absorptive' state through an anti-absorptive or theatrical mode of representation. That this absorptive state is base and blind,[32] despicable and destructive, while its rendering is measured, lucid and uncommonly beautiful not

only poses another contradiction but also brings us back, however circuitously, to the question of *São Bernardo*'s relationship to realism.

REALISM REVISITED

Charles Rosen's and Henri Zerner's recent two-part article 'What Is, and What is Not, Realism?' provides a basis for the contention that realism is inherently 'theatrical'. 'Realist painters', they maintain, 'call our attention first to the fact and the means of representation, only secondarily to the objects represented.'[33] The authors trace this essential aspect of the realist tradition to a literary source: the novels and theoretical writings of Gustave Flaubert. The radical opposition between style and content in *Madame Bovary*, and Flaubert's awareness of that radical opposition as expressed in letters to friends describing the process of writing the novel, is the foundation upon which they construct their conception of realism.

'Still remaining banal': that is the condition which preserves the integrity and the truth of Flaubert's imaginative re-creation of contemporary life. It is as if the reality represented by Madame Bovary was to remain unaffected, even untouched, by the 'vividness, precision, and distinction' which were the ideals of Flaubert's art. The style must remain uncontaminated by the mediocrity of the characters and situations, uncorrupted by triviality. At the same time, the characters and situation are hermetically sealed from the aestheticism of the style. Flaubert wants to maintain a double purity. (It should also be clear that, in Flaubert's hands, the grace and distinction of the style is brutal, although oblique, comment on the triviality of the culture portrayed.)[34]

São Bernardo replicates the 'double purity' of Flaubert's novel. The beauty and lucidity of the style stand in marked contrast to the baseness, bestiality and imperfect comprehension which it had been created to represent. The process of aestheticisation of human deprivation and misery in *São Bernardo* risks the allegation of escape into art for art's sake, but according to Rosen and Zerner, this apparent contradiction is inherent in the realist mode of representation:

If contemporary life was to be represented with all its banality, ugliness, and mediocrity undistorted, unromanticized, then the aesthetic interest had to be shifted from the objects represented to the means of representation. This is the justification of the indissoluble tie of mid-nineteenth-century realism to art-for-art's sake; and although it is sometimes seen as an odd contradiction in Realism, it is, in fact, the condition of its existence.[35]

The authors proceed to denounce the various heightened effects of reality achieved by painters who have 'altered the balance between the perception of the picture as a design on a flat surface and as a suggestion of three-dimensional space'. They dismiss these painters' insistence on 'painting as an open window' as inherently illusionistic: 'Such pictures are both realistic and unreal; they have nothing to do with Realism.'[36]

[37] I use this term advisedly (in place of 'human being') because the characterisation concentrates imperfectibility in the male protagonist, converting his female counterpart – in accord with a polarisation frequent in Latin American culture – into the locus of virtues almost too perfect to endure in this world and thus more appropriate to the next.

[38] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of the Film*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979, p 38.

[39] ibid, p 39.

The obvious cinematic parallel is the 'window on the world' modality, achieved by creating the equivalent illusion that the medium has been rendered transparent. To participate in that illusion is to invite oneself to be absorbed into the frame; to refuse or to be refused that illusion is to acknowledge or be compelled to acknowledge one's status as a beholder, and thus the essential theatricality of the experience.

THE POLITICS OF AESTHETIC DISTANCE

What, then, are the politics of the aesthetic distance so scrupulously cultivated in *São Bernardo* through its re-theatricalisation of the film medium? Is the film essentially Brechtian and therefore politically committed to transforming the reality it purports to represent, or is it essentially de-politicising and escapist in emphasising the perfectability of art in contrast to the imperfectability of man?[37]

According to Stanley Cavell, the disarming beauty of Terence Malick's *Days of Heaven* derives from the fact that it rotates upon a similar axis: 'the disparity between the beauty of objects and the relative insignificance of human beings'.[38] He credits Malick, his former student, with the following achievement:

*Having discovered, or discovered how to acknowledge, a fundamental fact of film's photographic basis: that objects ... participate in the recreation of themselves on film; ... Objects projected on a screen are inherently reflexive; they occur as self-referential, reflecting on their physical origins. Their presence refers to their absence, their location in another place. Then if in relation to objects capable of such self-manifestation human beings are reduced in significance, or **crushed by the fact of beauty left vacant**, perhaps this is because in **trying to take dominion over the world**, or in aestheticizing it (temptations inherent in the making of film, or of any art), they are refusing their participation with it.*[39] (my italics)

The oblique way in which Cavell, toward the end of this passage, reinserts the topic of the film-maker's self-consciousness and responsibility brings us around to another way of formulating the dilemma posed by the politics of *São Bernardo*'s aesthetics: Is aestheticising the world (through the representation of it) equivalent to trying to take dominion over it? Is Hirszman's project of making *São Bernardo* the novel his own by transforming it into *São Bernardo* the film, however different, on some deep level similar to Paulo Honório's project of making São Bernardo the plantation his own?

Certainly Paulo Honório, though he claims to be oblivious to the beauty of the place ('Beautiful?,' he puzzles in his first conversation with Madalena, 'I can't say I've noticed. It may be beautiful. All I can say is that it's not such a bad place.') has committed himself to *making* it beautiful, to regenerating it from ruin. Its beauty for him, of course, is an incidental if not imperceptible consequence of making it productive. But isn't Hirszman's ambition also to make a 'productive' film? For the film to be productive in Hirszman's terms is for it to negate the concept of

productivity as Paulo Honório understands it: the garnering of financial gain at the price of one's own soul and of the physical and/or moral destruction of all those other beings on whom one depends to make that financial gain possible. Madalena clearly fulfills a different function in Paulo Honório's overall scheme than the peasants who till his fields, yet both are physically depleted if not destroyed as a price of the execution of the master's grand plan. One key function of the contrasting modes of representation which Hirszman develops in the film is to differentiate the 'spiritual' consequences from the 'material'.

This differentiation, and the distanciation which results from it and from the numerous other techniques of estrangement described in this essay, works to prevent 'a sentimental reabsorption of the intelligence art secretes'[40] and 'to free the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment'.[41] Hirszman is not engaged in the advocacy of theatricality *over* absorption, of classicism *over* modernism, of realism *over* illusionism, of aesthetics *over* politics, of instruction *over* pleasure, but rather in the exploration of the dialectical interplay between them. The result is a film which is simultaneously an exquisitely wrought aesthetic object and an uncompromising statement of political belief and commitment.

For all its anticipatory contemporaneity, *São Bernardo* is not 'postmodernist' in the sense Fredric Jameson uses to characterise the artistic products of post-war, consumer-oriented, multi-mediated society as experienced in the United States, one of whose primary manifestations in the 'disappearance of a sense of history': 'Our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change which obliterates traditions of the kind all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve.'[42] Rather than negating history, *São Bernardo*, artistic product not of the 'metropolis' but of the 'periphery', holds up the past as an oblique mirror in which we can view the present and even glimpse certain suggestive directions for the future.

[40] Stanley Cavell, op cit, p 97.

[41] Laura Mulvey, op cit, p 18.

[42] Fredric Jameson, op cit.

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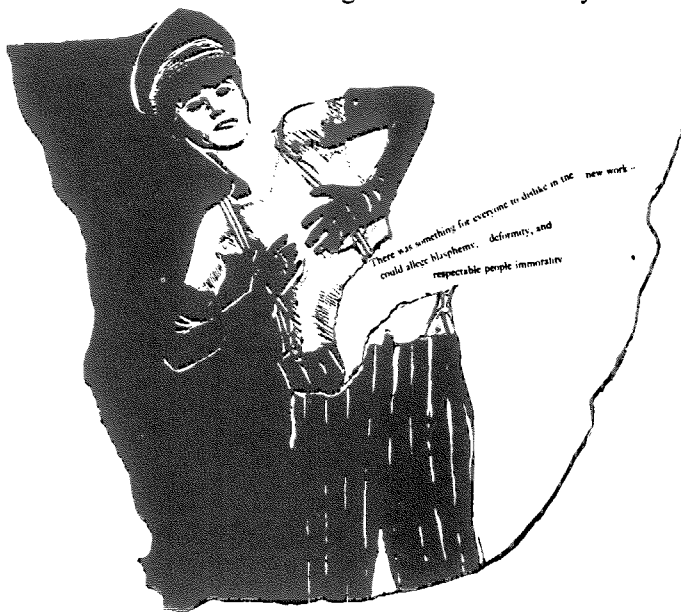
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ANOTHER ANGLE ON ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILM

MICK EATON REVIEWS 'TWO LAWS'

Recording sound in social space: Borroloola women tape a discussion in *Two Laws*.

Two Laws/Kanymarda Yuma is a film made by the Borroloola Aboriginal Community, who live in the Northern Territory of Australia. The film was shot by two Sydney film-makers, Alessandro Cavadini and Carolyn Strachan, but because of the Borroloola community decisions over the choice of subject matter and methods of filming *Two Laws* is described by its distributors as 'an epic story told by the Borroloola people'. The film is in four parts, each dealing with different moments in the history of white Australian institutional attempts to coerce the Aboriginal people into the acceptance of white law and white custom. Part One – *Police Times* – re-enacts a round-up and forced march which took place in 1933; Part Two – *Welfare Times* – deals with the

process of settlement and the imposition of government policies of assimilation during the 1950s; Part Three – *Struggle for Our Land* – is concerned with more recent fights for the recognition of Aboriginal land and law in the Land Claims courts; and Part Four – *Living with Two Laws* – describes the movement back to traditional Aboriginal lands. The film therefore represents an attempt by the Borroloola people not only to talk of their own history, but also to decide how that history should be represented. It is a directly political project, as its title suggests, in its efforts to reconstruct and remember white institutional coercion and Aboriginal struggles against it.

Because of its concentration on history and

political campaigns *Two Laws* can in no way be described as a piece of ethnographic cinema. Ethnographic information about the Borroloola people is systematically underplayed in the film-text. Yet, paradoxically, the film's aesthetic strategies, which are 'unconventional' in relation to dominant documentary forms, are adopted because of the Borroloola social structure – a social structure which the film is unable to present without the risk of reinstating the community as an object of white anthropological enquiry. So before describing the textual strategies of *Two Laws* in more detail it is necessary to take a short detour through the assumptions of ethnographic film-making.

In an article published in a special issue of *Cambridge Anthropology* on ethnographic film, Jerry W Leach[1] distilled 'a rough set of guidelines for making ethnographic films' from papers given at an international conference on visual anthropology.[2] Since this journal does not have wide currency in film circles, it is worth reprinting these in full:

1. *Seek co-operation from the film subjects.*
2. *Avoid large or alien crews.*
3. *Be prepared to spend a lot of time, i.e. not just a few weeks.*
4. *Acclimatise people to the camera.*
5. *Use participant, i.e. hand-held and mobile, camerawork.*
6. *Do not rate exotic subject matter more highly than normal everyday behaviour.*
7. *Let informants speak for themselves on film.*
8. *Avoid staging, reconstructing, or directing as much as possible, but if unavoidable, then identify such material in the film or in print.*
9. *Use synchronous sound.*
10. *Avoid music, i.e. non-indigenous music, in the soundtrack.*
11. *Let viewers really see the subject matter, i.e. avoid persistent choppiness.*
12. *Do not think of a film as a kind of lecture, i.e. avoid overpowering narrators.*

[1] 'The Needs of Ethnographic Films', *Cambridge-Anthropology* Special Issue [1977]. See also Keith Tribe, 'The Representation of the Real', in the same issue.
[2] Reprinted as Paul Hockings (ed), *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, The Hague, Mouton, 1975. See also review article by Mick Eaton and Ivan Ward, 'Anthropology and Film', *Screen* Autumn 1978, vol 17 no 3, pp 113-118.

13. *Artistry and technical excellence come second to conveying the subject matter well.*
14. *Admit the presence of the camera and the film makers in the film.*
15. *Try to see that subjects and participants get to view the finished product if appropriate.*

These guidelines, synthesised from the practices of the most culturally respected film-making within the discourse of scientific anthropology, can be seen first of all as a reaction against the way in which tribal peoples have been used on the one hand as exotic fodder in innumerable travelogues and documentaries, and on the other as an unspecified and unpredictable threat in narrative cinema since the 1890s. These points (particularly 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 15) indicate how to minimise the disruption caused by entering a community to film it. But at the same time they serve to construct an aesthetic (notably 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) aimed towards an adequate representation of 'real life'. The guidelines conventionalise aesthetic strategies which cover the whole range of the film-making process from pre-production through filming itself to editing, strategies which say to an audience: this is how it is, this is real. It is no surprise that the aesthetic which emerges from them comes very close to that valorised by realist critics of narrative fiction cinema.

Two Laws shares the assumptions of participant-ethnographic cinema with regard to the responsibilities of film-makers towards the people they are filming. But, interestingly enough, although the film's aesthetic strategies are contingent on priorities of Aboriginal custom and social relationships, these strategies also happen to accord with those of realist cinema. The most striking example of this is the use throughout the film of a wide-angle lens. In an interview with the film-makers conducted by Tina Kaufman,[3] this is explained as follows:

... *traditional Aboriginal people find it insulting to go in on a close-up of a face or a hand. They do not like the body dissected.... When looking at other films of Aboriginal places the people always discussed the land, the mountains and the rivers,*

[3] In a dossier on *Two Laws* available from the film's distributor, The Australian Film Commission, Victory House, 99/101 Regent Street, London W1.

whether it was good country for hunting. The wide-angle lens allows people to be placed in the country. Further, the use of the wide-angle lens was in keeping with the complex structures of kinship and the strong notions of the group. For example one person may be talking for older people who are sitting behind them. Because men and women always sit separately a wide-angle was necessary to show this, as often in other films, the camera focuses on one or other group and ignores the fact that both groups are participating in the discussion or action. Moreover, the wide angle destroys the notion of truth spoken through an individual representative of the group. With the use of the wide-angle in group discussions, contradictions are revealed within the frame.

The Borroloola people seem to have come to the same aesthetic conclusions as André Bazin. But these questions about cinematic space arise from ideas of social space which appear to be of crucial importance in Borroloola ideology. Since the film-makers were also given 'skin' relationships (that is, a spatial position within the social structure) and since the people themselves were involved in operating technical equipment, the position of the camera and sound recorder in relation to what was being filmed was highly constrained, and subordinated to social structural determinations. Clearly, this is very different from the kind of decision-making about camera angling that takes place in the production of most films, documentary or fiction, where decisions are usually based on informational or narrative content combined with the film-makers' notions of 'what makes a good shot'. Given this radical departure from conventional film practice, which confers on the film a similarity of 'style' throughout, it is unfortunate that the reasons behind it could not have been inscribed within the film-text itself. We have to resort to extra-textual sources – interviews with the film-makers, for example – to explain why the film looks the way it does.

Kinship and social structures have always been a problem for ethnographic film. Although they are the meat-and-potatoes of written anthropological discourse, and crucial determinants of individual and group activity, they are simply not photogenic. Obviously the makers of *Two Laws* were wary of minimising the historical and political impact of their film by reinscribing the Borroloola people as exotic natives with strange ideas about who sits where.

But this is a film in which those concerned insist on the difference of their own laws, insist that social structural issues are the idiom for arguing land rights. The extent to which the film-makers respected those laws fundamentally determines what we as an audience are allowed to see. Equally, though, the audience should have been respected enough to have been told why.

The wide-angle lens, though able to show spatial connections between individuals and groups, is in many respects no more adequate to the representation of real space than the most elaborate continuity cutting. The distortion produced by the wide-angle lens is particularly apparent in this film, not only in panning shots, but also when characters approach the camera or point at it (an aspect of *mise-en-scène* which, incidentally, also 'dissects' the body). This was apparently not regarded as a matter of concern by the Borroloola. The point was to represent the social context from which a person speaks: visual effects of lens technology were of no importance to them. But these effects nevertheless produce a level of meaning in the film, and pose a problem for any audience struggling to make meaning from a film which is probably one of the most important experiments in historical/ethnographic/political film-making of recent years. Was it therefore absolutely necessary for the white film-makers to omit the ethnographic information about Borroloola social structure which would have explained the choice of this aesthetic?

Similar questions can be posed about the use of acting and the reconstruction of historical events, although these devices are much more successfully integrated into the film-text. *Two Laws* was shot chronologically, and this is communicated by the way the people seem, as the film proceeds, to gain greater confidence as actors. In the first part, *Police Times*, the story of the round-up and forced march is told both through the memories of old people and also through a dramatisation in which the young men of the community take on the roles of their forebears. This dramatisation is observed with the same wide-angle lens and eschews the conventions of continuity cutting: inserts, reverse shots etc. Consequently, the film never allows this process of remembering to fictionalise the incident being recalled. On the contrary, it documents the learning process as the old women instruct the younger people, including

the white man playing the police constable, Stott, who carried out the wishes of the cattle barons by evicting Aborigines from their tribal lands.

In Part Two there is a similar documentation of the assimilation process of the 1950s, in which the Borroloola women direct a white woman taking the role of a welfare co-ordinator in what to say: 'You go wash that child and I'll give you a new dress.' The difficulty with these scenes lies not in the role of the camera as witness to this process of memory and learning in opration, nor in the way we as audience witness the growth of confidence of people in front of the camera. The problem is that a distinct impression is created at the beginning of the film that acting – pretending to be somebody else – is not a Borroloola mode of story-telling. Apart from the films they had been shown by Strachan and Cavadini, the actors had very little experience of television or film:

There had been some John Wayne westerns and Kung Fu films that had come to Borroloola. There is no radio, newspapers or television. The films had been seen by the younger people but the old people had never bothered to go. Apart from the school kids, most people hadn't liked the films.[4]

To what extent is this process of remembering through drama an imposition of the white film-makers?

These scenes stand next to others in which people re-tell their own memories of the events concerned. Here the participants seem to perform more readily to camera and, like exponents of the oral tradition everywhere, flesh out their stories with moments of acting; a man tells how a policeman beat him, and for a moment he is that policeman hitting a tree with a baton and shouting. But the film wishes to distance itself from these memories by juxtaposing them with the reconstructed scenes. There is here an implicit criticism of the way the memories of individuals are frequently used in documentary cinema, both as 'evidence' – a guarantee of truth – and as a ploy to draw an audience into an easy identification with the oppressed. At the same time, however, the film seems to fear the possibility of emotional response to these memories. 'Distanciation devices' may have become an intolerable

orthodoxy among independent film-makers. Perhaps we should recognise, as Brecht did in his poem 'On Everyday Theatre', that the oral tradition contains quite enough distanciation devices of its own. In 1929, when he wrote that poem, Brecht was calling for an aesthetic which allowed the audience to be distanced from the drawing-room conventions of bourgeois theatre. Are film-makers not involved in a different set of imperatives when dealing with the conventions of a kind of documentary film-making which uses for its subject matter people's memories of oppression?

These are the questions which *Two Laws* raised for me, questions which can be asked of many films made during the last few years which, commendably, try to work against the grain of documentary film conventions. To what extent should the reasons why, and the methods whereby, those conventions are attacked be inscribed into a film with as much clarity and precision as possible? If an audience begins to wonder whether it has been treated less responsibly than the film-makers treated their subjects, does this not lessen the potential of a film as an interrogation of established conventions?

This, of course, raises the question of the intended audience for *Two Laws*, a question also prompted by the fact that much of the film's dialogue is in English, an unfamiliar language to most of the participants and not the one in which their tribal laws are formulated. The film-makers give a very interesting and somewhat surprising answer to this question:

Many of the films that we screened to the community during the first few months were films in the language of other Aboriginal communities, American Indians or Africans. The people were pleased that they spoke their own language and were aware that the subtitles were a good idea for a European audience but they were making Two Laws for other Aboriginal communities as well as Europeans. As traditional communities are unskilled in reading, subtitles are inappropriate. The people chose to speak in English which for some is a very new and difficult language. It was quite a struggle at times but the people are very committed to developing communication between different Aboriginal communities.[5]

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[4] ibid.

[5] ibid.

Ironically, the language of imperialism becomes the *lingua franca* of the Aboriginal communities. So two audiences are inscribed into the film with two different cultures and two laws. It is a tribute to the endurance of the Borroloola people that, as far as can be judged from this film, their traditional law and legal institutions seem far more appropriate for every sector of the community – young and old, male and female – than our laws and legal institutions are for us. It remains to be seen how the film will be used by other Aboriginal groups in their fight, against the most powerful sections of white society, to recover rights to their lands. Perhaps for them the aesthetic strategies of the film will not seem as difficult as they probably will for a European audience. But *Two Laws* deserves to be seen and discussed by that audience not only as a model of collaborative film-making, but also as an attempt to challenge the conventions of documentary cinema.

TEACHING THIRD WORLD CINEMA

TESHOME H GABRIEL TAKES A CRITICAL LOOK AT CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN THE WESTERN CLASSROOM

[In this study I provide examples from African films to demonstrate the three major components of a course in Third World cinema at the University of California, Los Angeles. These are: the clarification of the grammar of African film; the exploration of the production milieu of African film; and the need for a critical construct of African film culture.]

Introduction

When the meaning of a film is inaccessible because the belief systems, ideologies, cultural references or styles of filmic execution are foreign to the viewer, the effect is that of a 'cultural curtain'. 'Reading' a film from a geographical and cultural distance may be problematised by several factors. The most serious example is the tendency of an audience to read a film by automatically incorporating it within the methodologies and critical matrices which are already familiar to the audience. This approach is much in evidence in the Western world where sophisticated critical and theoretical categories domesticate whatever is alien to its own cultural tradition. The domestication process may enrich Western aesthetics and cultural traditions, but while doing so it necessarily misrepresents and eventually subverts other cultural traditions. Because students in the West are not getting enough general knowledge about other cultures in school or even at university, there is a lack of cultural perspective and intercultural understanding.

In a course of study which focuses on Third World films, there is perhaps much to be gained in attending to the Theory of Translation.[1] In translation theory there are two distinct approaches: the first aims towards a 'target text' where the effort is to translate it point-for-point into terms of Western cognition. In such translation the terms of the original culture are lost. In the second approach, the more important for the present purpose, the quest is for a deeper understanding of the 'source text', for meaning as contexted in its own terms. The pedagogical issue for a teacher of Third World films is to insure against the students assuming that the features of a Third World film always 'correspond' to something familiar in America or Europe.

Text and Context

Students in a Third World film class must be brought to realise that not only are surface meanings in Third World films replete with unfamiliar cultural clues as to point of view and socio-political and ideological complexities, but also that there is a deeper level of meaning which cannot be intuited by the uninformed viewer. The first stage of teaching, then, advances the notion that text and context of Third World cinema both need careful scrutiny.

For instance, in Western media liquor is often poured liberally into a glass; consider the

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[1] Gideon Toury, 'Translated Literature: System, Norm, Performance', *Poetics Today* (special issue on 'Theory of Translation and Intercultural Relations') Summer/Autumn 1981, vol 2 no 4, pp 9-27.

number of times this happens in a single episode of the US television soap opera, *General Hospital*, for an indication of the pervasiveness of this symbol in Western visual media. What does a lavish splashing of spirits signify to the Western audience? If not the wealth of the pourer, it is the power to drink without censure in the middle of the day, or whenever an unpleasant event occurs. These received impressions will not carry the Westerner far in viewing African or Middle Eastern films, however. For instance, in a Moroccan film directed by Souhel Ben Baraka, *A Thousand and One Hands* (1972), the blonde wife of the Moroccan rug businessman, Jamal, at one point pours whiskey into a glass. In Morocco, as well as in other Middle Eastern countries where Islam is the principal religion, alcohol is prohibited by Islamic law. The white woman's action, and Jamal's acquiescence to her offer, characterises the couple as sacrilegious and godless. The unwary student has missed a key signal of the film's meaning if the scene is analysed with only the Westerner's stock of cultural references.

Understanding a Third World film involves not only such symbols, it also extends to the very subject matter of films and to the treatment of characters. For example, in the Ethiopian film *Gouma* (1973), directed by Greek-Ethiopian Michael Papatakis, a murderer completes his penitential sentence to wander, enchained and begging, until he has made payment for his *gouma*, blood guilt. Such a custom is unknown in the West; consequently no such theme could have engendered a movie in the West. The question of 'honour' or contrition, as opposed to vengeance by the family of the deceased, is prevalent in African folkloric cinema; yet it has such a foreignness to it that non-Third World viewers will find it hard to penetrate. Another characterisation that receives an altogether different treatment in Third World films is the depiction of a blind person. In Western films, the blind may be regarded as victims of misfortune; but in such African films as *Gouma* or *Xala* (directed by the Senegalese film-maker Ousmane Sembene, 1974) the blind person is presented as a seer with foresight and foreknowledge and functions as the decoding device to unravel not only the true meaning but also the ultimate resolution of the film.

The most 'simple' and pervasive icons may

have radically different meanings outside their own milieu. In Western culture, for instance, the blue-eyed blonde signifies 'beauty', whereas in the Moroccan film, *A Thousand and One Hands*, in the Mauretanian film, *Soleil O* (directed by Med Hondo, 1969) or the Senegalese film, *The Black Prince of St. Germain* (directed by Ben Diogaye Beye, 1974), she (or it) stands as a symbol of the destructiveness of Europe or cultural imperialism. Also, 'white' in Western culture is a colour which stands as a sign for 'purity' or 'innocence'. In the Ethiopian film, *Harvest: 3000 Years* (directed by Haile Gerima, 1975), however, a peasant girl's dream about the landlord's imminent death is recounted to her grandmother, prompting a question about the colour of his attire, which was 'pure white', the cultural symbol of death. 'And what did your father wear?' asks the grandmother, to which the girl responds, 'the same worn-out dress he always wears', a reference to life. For the funeral procession in *A Thousand and One Hands*, where all the mourners are dressed in white, the cross-cultural translation will be identical to dark dress worn by mourners in the West. Here is a case where the signifier, dependent on oppositions, reverses the order of signification.

Geographical or cultural distance may render a film text unpalatable to a Western audience, though this effect may arise also from the audience's limitations of consciousness, its prejudices or strongly held beliefs. For instance, in *Ceddo* (directed by Sembene, 1977), Moslem imperialism is condemned for its role in the breakdown of traditional African spirituality: devout followers of Islam may consequently find the film difficult. Similarly, *Soleil O* depicts the African adoption of Christianity by turning the symbol of a cross into a sword, representing the ideology of the 'white man's burden' – founded as it is on the Christian ethos – as a violent intrusion into the peaceful and communal African social fabric.

Ethnocentric readings may transform a minor incident in a narrative into a major one. For instance, the ritual context of animal slaughter in African films immediately raises the question of cruelty to animals: what Western students perceive as brutal acts may be perfectly normal in the African context. In many rural societies, slaughtering animals for food is recognised as a fact of life, whereas for Westerners whose only

contact with meat involves the plastic wrapped supermarket package, such carnage may appear gratuitous. More importantly, American students, taught since childhood that their worth is defined in terms of individual achievement and responsibility, may find representations of the close-knit structure of the African family, involving responsibility for the community, simply bewildering.

A course on Third World cinema must provide a wide range of examples, so that students have the opportunity to develop a sense not only of the plurality of cultures and societies but also of their distinctiveness and worth. What is aimed for is a widening of students' perspectives on artistic representation and on an understanding of the source texts on their own terms and within their own cultural patterns.

In making a film rooted in Third World cultures, the film-maker's choice is circumscribed both culturally and ideologically. Thematic as well as stylistic features of such films have been characterised as 'primitive',

reminiscent of early cinema. This kind of judgement is generally based on technological criteria of cultural worth and an assumed trajectory of the evolution of film language from the 'primitive' to the 'civilised'.

To the uninitiated eye, for instance, *Emitai* (directed by Sembene, 1972) appears devoid of elementary cinematic pacing and a basic variety of shots. Here the close-up is avoided and narrative time seems to approximate real time. Yet in *Mandabi* (1968), shot three years earlier, Sembene's mastery of the technique of the conventions of close-up is quite evident. Each film uses cinematic conventions that correspond to its own thematic orientation. *Emitai* is set in rural Africa of the colonial period: *Mandabi*, shot in post-independence, urban Africa, uses a quicker pace as well as tight close-ups. The use of tight close-action shots in *Emitai*, however, would have destroyed the film's social/collective percepts: isolating individuals would have jarred the social unity and collective purpose the film was attempting to stress.

Emitai: social unity and collective purpose represented in long shot.

The long takes and leisurely rhythm evident in many African films may be read as conveying an approximation of time as perceived by rural people, for whom land is both a means of livelihood and the source of a strong sense of identity. The Angolan films *Pathway to the Stars* (1980) and *Conceição Tchiambula (A Day in a Life*, 1981), both directed by Antonio Ole, as well as the Ethiopian *Harvest: 3000 Years*, characteristically use long shots of a man or woman walking across a landscape. The small scale of human figures in relation to the background, a general feature of African pictorial representation, suggests the traditional cosmology, in which the individual is dwarfed by the land.

The Western student, situated within a particular film culture, brings to film viewing a codified set of perceptions and interpretive methods. For this audience, long and/or group shots may be thought of as merely delineations of narrative space: for the Third World viewer with a strong sense of identification with land and community, the long shot and long take of the land and group scenes may in fact function in the same way as a close-shot does for a Western spectator. Most student viewers, for instance, find the pilgrimage scene in *A Thousand and One Hands* extremely boring, yet for the Moroccan, it can operate as a powerful representation of country, family and past.

African films which depict life in the countryside often emphasise space rather than time. The skilful manipulation of time that characterises Western cinema is sparingly employed. Furthermore, in shots of rural life space tends to be depicted as communal or social rather than as individual. However, when African life within an urban or European context is depicted, space is frequently constructed as 'individual' and not 'social'. Individual space assigns the narrative discourse to a protagonist, an individual character. Social space, on the other hand, submerges the individual within a narrative which deals with a group and can only be understood in terms of its social context.

When African film-makers, on the other hand, treat an urban or metropolitan subject, the pace is quicker and the cutting more rapid. These elements of style convey a particular set of meanings in the African context. For example, *Soleil O* deals with an African working in Paris.

It makes use of cross-cutting, rapid camera movement and other devices familiar to a Western audience to portray the role of France in sapping African energy. These devices are used, not to build suspense as so often in Western cinematic practice, but to represent frustration. Because the film is dichotomised along race and class lines, cross-cutting signals not the development of an interpersonal clash, but rather a political and ideological conflict. The tug-of-war between these two stylistic approaches, one anchored within a Western cinematic tradition and the other in African culture, is increasingly becoming a central issue in characterising African cinema. Many African films employ both approaches within a single film, particularly where the theme of migration from rural to urban areas is dealt with.

Production and the Technological Determinants of Culture

No course on Third World cinema would be complete without a discussion of the problems attendant on the film-making process itself: in the African case, state governance and regulations, dearth of finance, the lack of a technical infrastructure, the virtue of 16 mm film for filming in the field, and the absence of any network for distributing films to their proper audience – the rural masses. Exposing Western students to the rough conditions many Third World film-makers face in the field should temper standardised aesthetic judgements as to what films should be and how they should look. The cultural dominance of Western cinema tends to enforce 'ideological carry-overs'. Western technological flash in particular impresses the urban African film viewer (and would-be film-maker) as well as the Western spectator, and abundantly imported American, European, Indian, Hong Kong and Egyptian films lead audiences to expect a certain level of technical brilliance from everything they see on the screen. This is a problem for the African film-maker who tries to develop a different style, a problem perhaps resolvable by eschewing the urban market for the rural audience. But the rural audience is troublesome because it is difficult to reach, given the cost of 35 mm film and the absence of distribution outlets.[2] The creation of an indigenously African film culture depends on

finding the means to show films on a continuing basis to this majority of the African population, which should form both the audience and the source of inspiration for an African cinema.

Toward a Critical Theory

The theoretical[3] component of this course on Third World cinema strives to bring students to an understanding of the avenues available to them as future critics and theorists of cinema. Just as the textual component of the course familiarises students with, in this case, the subtleties of African cultural symbols, and a consideration of conditions of production enhances awareness of the need to make technique serve ideas, so in the last part of the course, students begin to deal with the critical and theoretical challenges presented by African films. The challenges emerge most clearly when

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[2] Teshome Gabriel, *The Developing African Cinema: An Introduction*, Los Angeles, ASA/Crossroads press, forthcoming 1983.

[3] For a detailed discussion of Critical Theory as it pertains to the African film experience, see my article entitled 'Toward a critical theory of African cinema', in Bennetta Jules-Rosette (ed), *Popular Art and the New Media in Africa*, Norwood, New Jersey, Ablex Publishing Corporation, forthcoming, 1983.

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students find that received theories do not easily fit the films viewed in class.

What are the analytical tools that will permit a consideration of film texts and their conditions of production to inform an understanding of cinematic institutions in the Third World? The content and pedagogy of the course outlined here open up a possible means of answering this question, by suggesting three phases, or components, of a critical theory for Third World cinema, namely: a) 'the text', the films and their specific organisation of codes and sub-codes; b) 'reception', where audience expectations and prior knowledge of cinematic and cultural conventions govern the consumption of films; and c) 'production', where ideological determinants and factors of production shape the film industry and its organisation.

In Third World cinema in general, and in African cinema in particular, the thematic/formal characteristics of films and the critical/theoretical tools for understanding both texts and contexts are founded on traditional culture, and on socio-political action for self-determination and liberation. In a pedagogy which sets out with such different aesthetic and political conceptions, the position of the viewer/student is redefined and ideally, not only a cultural, but also an ideological, exchange takes place in the classroom.

EXPLOITATION FOR EXPORT

JANET HAWKEN AND CHAIM LITEWSKI
PREVIEW A PRIZE—WINNING
BRAZILIAN FILM

Fernando Ramos da Silva: from the slums to the soaps under the name 'Pixote'.

Pixote arrives in Great Britain in the wake of what might be another 'discovery' of Brazilian Cinema by Europe and the United States. Not since the early 1960s, when the Cinema Novo began winning prizes in international film festivals, have Brazilian films been so successful with critics and public alike. In 1981 alone, Brazilian films won 21 prizes in international film festivals. Of all the films entered in these competitions, only one was not co-produced by Embrafilme. This national concern co-produces, distributes and promotes Brazilian films. Since 1969, Embrafilme has produced more than 400 films. It supports a wide variety of productions which now range from overtly political films to soft-core pornography. Its basic policy is to co-produce as many films as possible — *Pixote* being a case in point, since Embrafilme provided only 30% of the capital for the film. There are, of course, contradictions involved in producing militant cinema within the parameters of a government-backed institution, particularly in Brazil. Two Cinema Novo film-makers with contradictory views on this subject are Carlos Diegues and Rui Guerra:

I defend Embrafilme as fundamental at this moment in the economy and development of Brazilian cinema. It is the only enterprise with sufficient economic and political power to confront the devastating voracity of the multi-national corporations in Brazil.[1] _ ..... _

Carlos Diegues

Embrafilme reflects the political and economic system. We cannot expect — once again it would be utopian — a state organ to act against the ruling classes and the official government line. A popular cinema would go against the interests of the current government, because today every economic program is directed toward increasing the wealth of the few and maintaining great social inequities, and it is hard to imagine that Embrafilme would oppose such a program. It tries at best to be liberal within this context....[2]

Rui Guerra

During the years of heavy political and moral censorship in the late '60s and early '70s the situation was very different. A military coup took place in 1964, but it wasn't until 1968, when a second 'coup within the coup' occurred, that repression and censorship became widespread in Brazil. The Congress was closed and the Government introduced the all-powerful Institutional Act Number Five, which institutionalised political repression throughout the country. In 1972 the Ministry of Education and Culture, and thus Embrafilme, inaugurated an annual prize for films adapted from literary works by 'dead authors'. This was one attempt to prevent politically conscious film-makers from making pictures about the contemporary problems of Brazilian society, inducing them to turn instead to the production of 'safe' costume dramas. The outcome of the years of political censorship was an explosion of 'allegorical' films. As the Cinema Novo film-maker Arnaldo Jabor has pointed out, 'For fifteen years we were like pianists exercising the keyboard for ourselves and no one else....The result was a cinema difficult in relationship to a wide audience.... After the opening to freedom in 1974, we could again conquer the audiences by speaking of

politics and sex in a more free way. We had trained ourselves to be understood by the audience. We acquired good habits speaking things with a closed mouth. This practice made Brazilian films very apt. We are daring as far as themes and intentions are concerned, but now we are worried about being seen and understood by the wider audience. That makes us more modern and realistic in order to conquer big audiences.'[3]

Conquest of the market is now in the forefront of all Embrafilme's policies. (It is no coincidence that in 1977, under the direction of Roberto Farias, another Cinema Novo director, Embrafilme promoted an International Congress on the Commercialisation of Films in Portuguese and Spanish-speaking countries, suggesting that each country open, by legislation, twenty per cent of its film market to other countries within the grouping.) Attempts at increasing Latin American audiences encouraged changes in Brazilian film-making. Success required an increasingly populist, slicker approach — with sex (now largely accepted by the censors) playing an important part in this commercialisation. Rui Guerra distinguishes populism from popularity in these recent films:

(Most of the films now made) are populist because of their attempt to compromise. They are not popular films, but rather films that use the people instead of defending them. They show the festivities, the dances, the people seen from an entirely paternalistic viewpoint — and what is populism if not political paternalism?[4]

The easing of censorship in 1974 — which coincided with the government policy of *Abertura* [opening] — helped change the face of Brazilian cinema, but another influence, that of the Globo Television network,[5] has been as important as changes in the wider political scene. Globo, by far the largest network in Brazil, came onto the nation's TV screens in the mid-60s. Many of the Cinema Novo film-makers joined it, working in drama and documentaries,

[1] Quoted in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*, Associated University Presses Inc, 1982, p 100.
[2] ibid, p 102.

[3] ibid.
[4] ibid, p 103.
[5] See Richard Paterson (ed), *TV Globo, Brazilian Television in Context*, London, British Film Institute, 1982.

when owing either to problems with the censors or to lack of money, they were unable to produce feature films. By the early '70s, with its staple diet of slick soap operas, Globo had already gained audiences in the region of 70% of the total viewing population. The effect on contemporary Brazilian cinema is readily apparent. For example, the presence of any of Globo's soap opera stars in a film is a virtual guarantee of its commercial success. Of the ten most commercially successful Brazilian films released in 1981, seven were by the Trapalhões, Globo comedians who simply make for the cinema longer versions of their successful TV programmes which are broadcast every Sunday.

Of the other three commercial successes two starred Sonia Braga, who began her career as an actress in Globo's *novelas* (soap operas). Braga also starred in the most successful Brazilian film to date, *Eu Te Amo*, which was produced by Walter Clarck. Clarck reigned over Globo from its beginning in 1965 until the mid-70s, defining the network's policies and programming. He now works as an independent producer with Embrafilme, and markets his own films.[6] It is not surprising, then, to discover that all the adult stars of *Pixote* have appeared at one time or another in Globo's soap operas. Moreover, Fernando Ramos da Silva, the slum child cast in the title role, has signed a fifteen-month contract with the network and assumed 'Pixote' as his artistic name.

Pixote sets out to dramatise a particular social and political issue, the plight of Brazil's homeless children. It focuses on one of them, ten-year-old Pixote, and follows his life in reform school and on the city streets. Hector Babenco, the director, prefaces the fiction with a direct address to camera, imparting a series of statistics: 50% of the population in Brazil is under 21, and this includes three million homeless children. The children become the prey of older criminals, and of each other, because Brazilian law prevents

[6] These links between Brazilian cinema and TV institutions have their limits: Trapalhões star Renato Aragão was turned down by the 'serious' Cinema Novo directors Bruno Barreto, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, and Carlos Diegues when he invited them to direct one of his recent films. And so far Embrafilme has failed to persuade Globo to show Brazilian films made outside the network.

anyone under eighteen from being prosecuted for criminal offences. Babenco speaks from a working-class district of São Paulo, introducing Fernando Ramos da Silva (whose 'real' home this is), who acts the part of Pixote in the film. The fictional narrative is thus sited in the 'real' world: Babenco's prologue attempts to merge the dramatisation with the lives of the people of São Paulo. The titles of the film then appear, accompanied by harsh, disturbing music which signals what is to come.

Pixote falls into two distinct parts. The first is set in a reform school to which minors are arbitrarily brought after periodic 'street cleanings', the particular purge with which the film opens having been prompted by the murder of a judge. What follows recalls the genre of the 'prison movie': there are scenes of violence, sexual abuse and intimidation, emphasis is placed on the power structures operating within personal relationships, and the point of view constructed is largely that of the inmates of the institution. Social, economic or political explanations do not form part of the deigesis: the focus is exclusively on the inherent drama of the situation and of the individuals in it. At this level, the law is seen to allow the exploitation of minors, and the police (embodied in the character of Almir, the police chief) are represented as corrupt, violent, and accountable to no one. Order is maintained by means of adult aggression and violence against the minors (aided by their own conspiracy of silence through fear), and by manipulation. Those ostensibly in control – the judge, the head of the reform school – in fact have none, and the media, although inquisitive, are powerless and gullible.

The prison is virtually an exclusively male world. The women who do briefly appear – a teacher, a nurse, a psychiatrist – function solely as signifiers of caring, help, knowledge and 'salvation'. The development of these qualities in the fiction is blocked by the lack of space the women characters are allowed. Adult men are represented as incompetent (the head of the reform school), caring but powerless (the judge and the newspaper reporter) or violent and corrupt (the police, the reform school supervisor and other workers there). The restricted space of the *mise-en-scène* (dormitory, refectory, toilets, police cells), the staging of events at night and behind closed doors, the shadowy lighting, all

heighten the horror of the situation. The way in which several of the boys are represented as gay serves to add to the violence and drama of life in the reform school, through, for example, scenes such as a homosexual rape and the on screen death of Lilica's lover after being beaten up by the adult workers. Conversely – but not uncharacteristically – homosexuality also provides a framework for much of the film's affective relations, specifically between Lilica and his lovers and friends (although Lilica's future victimisation is clearly predicted). In all these respects the genre is familiar enough, except that the protagonists are 'children'.

The second half of *Pixote* is set in the urban world outside the prison. Several of the minors escape, and the narrative follows four of them (Lilica, Dito, Chico and Pixote) as they survive by means of street thieving, drug-dealing, pimping for the prostitute Sueli and robbing her clients. These two distinct halves might appear to suggest a closed/open structure, but in fact the 'outside' is just as confining as the institution. Inside the reform school, the boys reflect and dramatise the urban setting from which they have been removed, in their games of bank-robbery and police interrogation. A TV broadcast and the prisoners' talk of getting out serve as reminders of their confinement and of the world outside. After the escape confining interiors and night-time scenes soon replace the sunlit space and freedom of the city locations. The reform school, with its authoritarian structures and pressures disappears, but only to be replaced by restrictions and oppression arising from the boys' own actions and attitudes.

The split between the two parts of the film also marks a change of pace. The urgency and taut construction of the first part gives way to a more episodic narration and diffused energy. At this point audience identification, uncertain from the start, is further problematised. Narration around life in the reform school constructs a position of concern for the boys which spectators may adopt. This is then weakened by repeated sequences of sex and violence by and between the young protagonists and various adults in the second half of the film. These incidents seem particularly gratuitous and titillating when not anchored to the reform school theme. What might have been termed, however problematically, a realist exposé switches to

straight exploitation. Its subsequent transformation into an international prize-winner and US art-house success provides a cautionary tale in the relations between the cinemas of developing countries and First World audiences.

When *Pixote* was first released in Brazil, critics saw it as a 'denunciation film'. Because of its subject, it sparked debates with 'experts' on crime and juvenile delinquency. Free advertising of this kind was reinforced by paid advertising, and certain audience expectations consequently promoted. *Pixote* had been described by critics as realistic, shocking and crude, and some critical comments had been made about the 'over the top' performance of Marilia Pera as Sueli. The film was fairly successful in a limited way among the bourgeoisie, to whom it was predominantly addressed. But soon it began to win prizes abroad.

Pixote won the Silver Leopard at the Locarno Festival, the Critics Prize at San Sebastian, and a third at Biarritz. Back in Brazil it was awarded the Air France prize for the best film of 1980 and played for another successful run. By then it had risen from the ranks of the 'denunciation film' to the realms of art. Brazilians have now discovered that the child actor has a certain something on his face and that Marilia Pera gives a great performance. Furthermore, after seeing the film, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, a fairly liberal grouping, funded the construction of a home for 'children in need' – the Pixote House.

In 1981 the film opened a year's run in a prestigious New York art cinema (the Quad) to extremely enthusiastic reviews. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* wrote: 'The performance of the characters is too good to be true. Pixote is absolutely marvellous.' Pauline Kael of the *New Yorker* invited Hector Babenco for lunch before penning her piece (reputedly only her second ever about a Latin American film). Werner Herzog then said that it was a strong work. Finally Judy Stone of the *San Francisco Chronicle* elevated *Pixote* to a 'classic art film' – 'on the same level as Bunuel's *Los Olvidados* and Truffaut's *400 Blows*'.

The US Film Critics Association designated *Pixote* the best foreign film of the year. Marilia Pera was named best actress for 1981 by the National Society of American Film Critics (Faye Dunaway came in second and Diane Keaton

third). The same Society lauded *Pixote* as the year's third best film, and Hector Babenco as third best director.
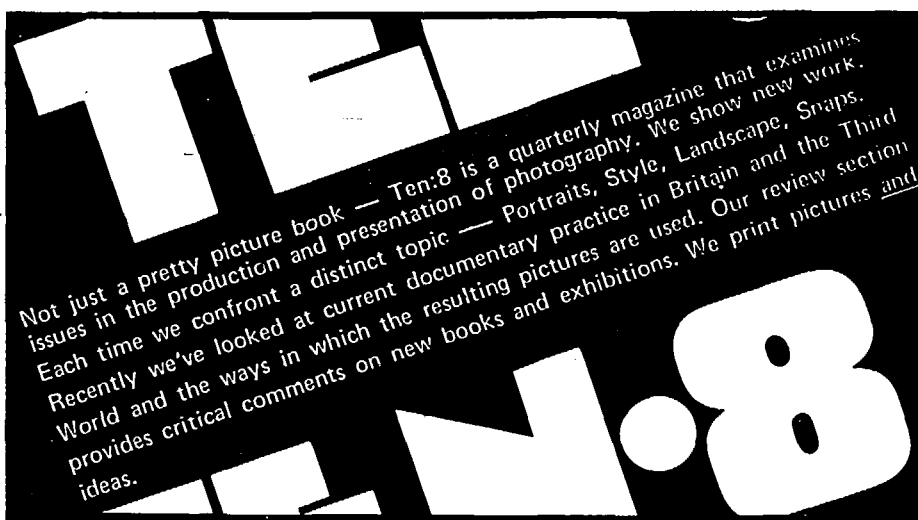
A number of explanations might be posited for this process of critical legitimisation outside (and then inside) Brazil. The film's subject matter, slum settings and amateur actors are redolent of the Italian neo-realism which initiated many US critics into art cinema – a point underscored by the reviewers' references to De Sica and Rossellini. (These sorts of settings provide 'realistic' narrative opportunities for nudity, particularly the eroticised representation of naked boys in the guise of street urchins.) The focus on children similarly provoked Judy Stone's comparisons with *Los Olvidados* and – more significantly for a US audience – *400 Blows*.

Apart from its evident relation to art cinema, *Pixote* offers the First World audience a characteristically exoticised view of Third World poverty (what *Variety* aptly termed in its review 'the urban jungle') rather than a broader perspective on the economic and political relations which create that poverty. The sensationalism of its material (children engaged in acts of explicit sex and violence, extreme institutional cruelty and corruption, etc.) tends to fictionalise the exposé, absolving us from responsibility for what we see. (So does its evocation of the tragic fatalism of Hollywood

prison pictures.) Like the newspaper photographs of extreme suffering analysed by John Berger,[7] the film provokes feelings first of shocked concern and then of inadequacy. Pixote's plight is both distant and apparently irremediable. We can do nothing but attempt to exorcise our own inadequacy in other ways (perhaps by being nice to our own children?). Even the Brazilian bourgeoisie are largely exonerated by the film's marginalisation of middle-class characters: if anything, theirs is a sin of omission, a lack of knowledge symbolically rectified by viewing the film.

In the United States, *Pixote*'s combination of art cinema and alleged social concern with (youthful) gay exploitation and violence offered its distributors a wide range of audiences – from *Missing* to *Cruising*, so to speak. In Britain, a thirty-second cut demanded under the Child Protection Act (which forbids showing minors in the same frame as adults performing the sexual act) should jeopardise none of these markets. But whether the reputation of its 'art cinema' distributors, Palace Pictures, will help it to secure another critical success, remains to be seen.

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[7] John Berger, 'Photographs of Agony', *About Looking*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980.

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11.15 Coffee
11.35 Introduction (Cary Bazalgette, B.F.I. Education)
12.00 Workshops 1 (Choice of at least three: on aspects of image analysis and possibilities for practical work)
1.00 Lunch
2.00 Children's Television (David Lusted, B.F.I. Education)
3.00 Workshops 2 (as 1 — choose another)
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ONE WAY—
OR ANOTHER?

SUE ASPINALL REPORTS ON A RECENT
WEEKEND SCHOOL ON CUBAN CINEMA

For many, Cuba represents the only acceptable model of a socialist society currently in existence. It also has a rich film culture. Does Cuban film culture offer a model for socialist film-makers in this country? Such a question, which might have generated productive debate at South West Art's recent study weekend,[1] was ignored in favour of a somewhat passive accumulation of 'knowledge' about Cuban society and the Cuban film industry. Nevertheless, Michael Chanan's and Robin Blackburn's contextualisation of Cuban cinema outlined the history of the country and its film industry in fascinating detail. We were reminded that Cuba had been a rich country with a flourishing bourgeoisie in the days when fortunes could be made out of sugar, and that the country was an early site of technological development, one of the first in the world to˜ have a railway system and flush toilets. As an

outpost of the USA, pre-revolutionary Cuba was used as a kind of media laboratory to test US products such as the telephone and the television. Many Cubans worked in the media: there was an advertising industry and a record industry, 500 cinemas and 70 radio stations. The American connection also made Hollywood movies a familiar and popular source of entertainment. At the same time, the cultured middle classes sustained an active modernist tradition in both painting and writing, with strong European links. All these factors help to explain how the Cuban film industry emerged out of its own unique history.

Other aspects of Cuban history such as slavery, colonisation, US intervention and nationalist struggles, which finally culminated in the 1959 Revolution, were outlined in and illustrated by three films: *Girón*, *El Otro Francisco* and *Viva La Republica*. However, given the heavy emphasis on Cuban history, there was a tendency for these films to function solely as illustrations of particular historical events, rather than to be considered as cultural objects in any more complex sense. The choice of films suggested a

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[1] 'Cuban Cinema', a weekend school held at Dartington College, Devon, October 29-31, 1982, by South West Arts and supported by SEFT.

preoccupation with the question of how history is represented in film, and yet a potentially fruitful area of discussion was again not pursued.

Girón reconstructs the American invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. The film is clearly made from the point of view of the Cuban fighters and from an unequivocal belief that the Revolution must be defended. Within this framework, participants in the events re-enact their past actions, at the same time consciously remaining in the present and stressing the nature of the film as reconstruction and memory. The actors remember 'I stood here. No, here. I felt scared. My friend was over there,' establishing historic events as part of their own experience, claiming history as their own in a way that a straight-forward heroic narrative cannot. But at the same time the film retains much of the narrative pace and suspense of Hollywood action movies, while the sense of documentary authenticity which these re-enactments guarantee produces a further narrative tension and excitement in seeing history 'as it must have really been'. However, because *Girón* becomes almost a family album for Cuba as a national family, some narrative tension is ultimately sacrificed to the compulsion to 'record' important family events.

El Otro Francisco (directed by Sergio Giral, 1974) deals with the more distant history of slavery, staging the romanticised view of a Cuban nineteenth century liberal novelist, and then setting up a parallel enactment of a more 'realistic' and historically accurate and analytical narrative. It would have been interesting to discuss how far this strategy of juxtaposing conflicting bourgeois and socialist versions of reality can produce historical 'truth'. Or do films such as *Girón* and *El Otro Francisco* perhaps offer closed texts inscribed with a socialist identification, without in fact breaking down the process of identification and closure itself?

Such questions may not have been raised because of a desire to protect Cuban society from criticism and an identification with existing Cuban practice. Cuban films are so self-consciously part of Cuban political practice that criticism of one tends to imply criticism of the other. However, critiques of Cuban films are not necessarily intended to undermine support for Cuba, but only to point to areas that would benefit from further thought and action. In particular, John Hess in 'The Personal Is

Political in Cuba'[2] suggests that Cuban film-makers have offered idealised images of morally superior female revolutionaries, who are isolated from other women and die martyred deaths. He points out that such idealisations (in *Now It's Up to You*, directed by Manuel Octavio Gomez, 1974, or *A Woman, a Man, a City*, directed by Una Mujer, 1977) both urge women to become revolutionary heroines and absolve men of the responsibility to struggle against sexism.

Clearly, the relationship between the Western Left and Cuba is a politically sensitive one. British film-makers and theorists will approach Cuban cinema from a viewpoint informed by the experience of over a decade of sexual politics, libertarianism, and political marginalisation. This is quite a different experience from that of Cuban film-makers, with their links to the Cuban government and their relatively eager mass audience. Although we have much to learn from Cuban film practice, there is a dangerous tendency to assume that their experience is somehow more 'real' than our own. While our lack of political power may have provided a license for theoretical and creative work unhampered by certain practical exigencies, perhaps it is precisely this relative freedom that has made it possible for us to explore the meaning and purpose of socialism. Different political contexts may give rise to different priorities and different forms of film practice. What kind of films should we be making? Could we be more politically effective? What are the relative merits of working within television or the independent film sector? How does this compare with Cuban practice?

We need to look at Cuban film practice in its entirety – ie its conditions of production and the texts it produces – both to understand how it works in its own context, and also to consider what lessons it may hold for us. In Cuba, film-makers are keenly aware of their audiences. They have consistently used popular entertainment strategies to gain the attention of a population reared on Hollywood movies: what matters is that their films should be enjoyed and *used* by the mass of people, not admired by the few. This desire to communicate has given rise to an eclectic approach, which adopts a variety of

[2] *Jump Cut* no 20, 1979, pp 15-17.

forms and styles to express particular ideas: intellectual montage, narrated documentary, fiction combined with documentary, deconstruction, realism and surrealism. This Brechtian practice makes use of formal innovations only in the cause of a better representation of 'truth', and advocates a popular art which is 'intelligible to the broad masses', 'assuming their standpoint/confirming and correcting it/representing the most progressive section of the people'.[3]

However, in a capitalist society, 'representing the standpoint of the most progressive sector of the people' may be loosely interpreted as sympathy for the working class and the oppressed in general. In Cuba, the question is less straightforward. Once a workers' state is established, socialist film-making is no longer required to perform the task of resistance, celebration of struggle and antagonism to the existing order. Instead, it becomes part of the consolidation of the *new* order. The danger here is that film-making will lose its critical edge, its ability to interpret a complex reality, and be reduced to the banality of much socialist realism. But Cuban films do seem in many ways to include the positive qualities of Cuban political practice: they have the vitality, willingness to confront problems, and fresh approach which is present in the popular socialist consciousness and active democracy at the base of Cuban society. Yet at the same time what can be said and thought is circumscribed by the higher authorities, who exercise a benevolent dictatorship in determining the overall plan and priorities for society. Similarly, the founding fathers of ICAIC, the Cuban Film Institute, determine the priorities and themes of Cuban films. Their choices may be politically progressive and altogether admirable, but these people are not elected and cannot be challenged from outside the Institute, and only with great difficulty from within. For example, the absence of women directors – only one, Sara Gomez, has made a feature film in the last 20 years – indicates a serious weakness in ICAIC's system of promotion, a weakness which apparently goes unrecognised. Whose *point of view* do these unaccountable film-makers represent, and who controls the film-making process?

ICAIC is still run by a group who were relatively young communists in 1959 – Espinosa, Guevara and Alvarez. They were associated with aesthetic experiment, and had been film 'aficionados', not film-makers, before the Revolution. The aesthetic freedom endorsed by Fidel Castro ('Within the revolution, everything') has sustained diverse aesthetic strategies, but the limits of that freedom appear to be defined by a small, self-perpetuating group. Although ICAIC holds regular 'cine debates' which provide a forum for all production workers, only a small minority (3% to 4%) attend. Technicians working on particular films are able to contribute to script revisions. However, the assessors and leading figures are nearly always centrally involved in shaping and revising scripts, and have a determining influence which few have the authority to challenge. Potential directors are trained on newsreels, and their promotion depends on individual articulacy, persistence and ability to please the assessors. The power of these central individuals must therefore be considerable, and has remained virtually unchanged for the last 20 years.

ICAIC claims to be sensitive to the public mood, and to respond to the public's needs in terms of subject matter. Occasionally they feel that they have made a film which is too far in advance of public opinion, and hold back its release. The release of *De Cierta Manera (One Way or Another)*, the only feature film directed by Sara Gomez, was delayed for three years: its subject matter was a critique of 'machismo as underdevelopment'.[4] On other subjects, ICAIC has been less reticent in assuming a campaigning role, making films about the literacy movement, slavery, education, Cuban history, encouraging local democracy, voluntary labour in the sugar harvest, and so on. But in 1974 the Cuban public was not ready for a critique of machismo. This relationship between ICAIC and its public, the way in which political issues are handled in a non-capitalist society by a state film industry, would reward further investigation.

[3] Bertolt Brecht, 'Against Georg Lukacs', *New Left Review* no 84, March-April 1974, pp 39-53.

[4] Julia Lesage, 'One Way or Another', *Jump Cut* 20, 1979, pp 20-23.

De Cierta Manera: a critique of 'machismo as underdevelopment' witheld by ICAIC for years.

The gap between Cuban film-making and the practice of socialist film-makers in Britain is not as wide as this weekend school tended to suggest. In many ways, socialist film-making faces the same questions in any country. What is its relationship with its audience? How does its funding affect the kinds of films that can be made? Does formal innovation alienate the audience? Is a mass audience necessary? Although the Cuban answers to these questions may not be the same as our own, Cuban cinema offers a unique example of how entertainment and pleasure may be combined with the treatment of problems, experiences and histories through a variety of formal strategies. In particular, feature films such as *De Cierta Manera* and *A Woman, a Man, a City* have developed a combination of documentary and fiction which British film-makers have also begun to deploy in various ways (*Amy!, Song of the Shirt*).

At the weekend school Malcolm Coad's introduction of the Cuban concept of 'imperfect cinema'[5] stressed the sense in which Cuban films are seen as part of a *process*, in which particular aesthetic and textual strategies may prove politically useful and stimulating, but which does not elevate the film to the status of art-object, and for which production values are relatively unimportant. Above all, it is this active, flexible quality of Cuban film practice, its direct involvement in political and social life, which offers us a source both of comparison and of inspiration.

[5] cf Julio Garcia Espinosa, 'For an Imperfect Cinema', *Jump Cut* 20, 1979, pp 24-26.

National Feminist Film and Video Conference
Cardiff. April 15th-17th.

Feminist film as a political tool
Women and the unions
Animation
Female/feminist film – are they the same?

Channel 4 and S4C
Feminist imagery
Working in mixed workshops

Working with the experience gained from the Nottingham and Bristol groups we are planning a two day conference to give women the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences in production, training and exhibition of super 8, 16mm and video. There will be more talking than screenings but there is still plenty of scope to show films in the evening and as part of the workshops. We would like groups attending the conference to write background papers. If you'd like more information or want to organise a workshop get in touch with the South Wales Women's Film Group, Chapter Arts centre, Market Road, Canton, Cardiff. 0222 396061.
Supported by SEFT, Welsh Arts Council.

IRELAND:
THE SILENT VOICES

Women of the IRA. Derry

March 7
IRELAND: THE SILENT VOICES
Directed by Rod Stoneman, GB 1983, 80 mins.
Northern Ireland has been at the centre of media
attention for the past fifteen years. But the image we see
on our television sets and in our cinema is often very
different from the image seen abroad. This film aims to
demonstrate that fact by analysing British media
coverage of Ireland using comparative material from
foreign television. It also touches on the way that British
cinema's treatment of Ireland reveals a deep seated
continuity between film and television; from The Odd Man
Out to' The Gentle Gunman and The Long Good Friday British
cinema has tended to show Irish politics in a way that
denies rationality, making the acts of individuals seem
a-political and a-historical.

IRELAND: THE SILENT VOICES examines British
media coverage over the years and looks at the conflict
from these different perspectives.

March 14
MAEVE
Directed by Pat Murphy and John Davies, GB 1981, 110 mins.
Maeve investigates ideas of identity, unity and integration.
It explores the relationship between individual memory
and history in the North of Ireland. The central
character, Maeve, returns home to Belfast after a long
absence. Her arrival in the city stimulates a series of
memories of childhood and adolescence both in herself
and other people. Their memories are presented in the

"If you don't know what is happening in Northern
Ireland then you must be watching British televi-
sion, reading British newspapers, listening to British
radio ..... "

form of recounted experience and story-telling but
Maeve's are seen as episodes from the past thereby
contrasting the immediacy of a visual memory with the
oral tradition. The film emerges from the sense people
make of their personal lives in relation to the larger
narrative of what is happening in Ireland.

March 21
LAMENT FOR ART O'LEARY
Directed by Bob Quinn, Ireland 1974, 54 mins.
The breakthrough film of Irish Cinema in the 1970s,
which explores the relationship between the 18th century
and the present. Art O'Leary's wife expresses her sorrow
through the famous lament about the death of her
soldier husband, one of the Wild Geese, who was
outlawed and killed by English soldiers in 1773. The film
intercuts historical sequences and the present-day
rehearsal of a play about these events.

March 28
WRITING ON THE WALL
Directed by Armand Gatti, France 1982, 110 mins.
An extraordinary film which was made in Derry with
unemployed teenagers from the local workshop and with
the huge support of the people of Derry. Turning around
language and the way it is used to describe events, from
the folklore of the past to the graffiti of today, it was
constructed from initial improvisations and discussions
with the kids themselves.

MALE ORDER
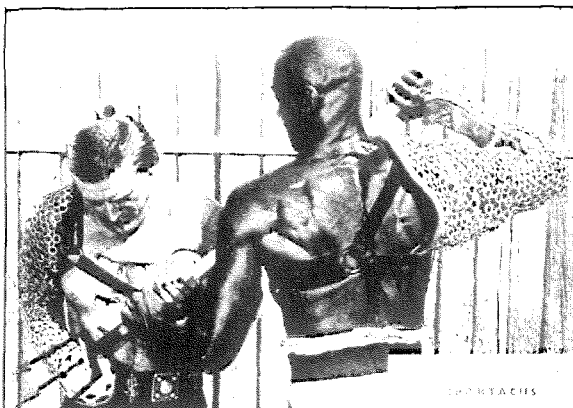
QUESTIONS OF
MASCULINITY
AND CINEMA
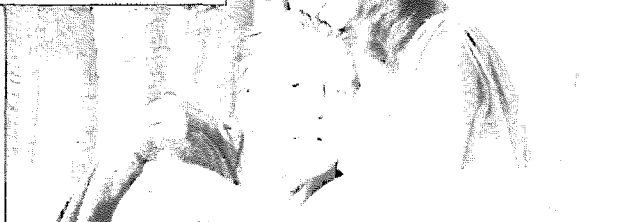
Raging Bull, Mad Max and Dirty Harry — real men or cardboard cut-outs? While we all have a common-sense understanding of what these stereotypes mean, and may deplore their persistence in popular cinema, there has been very little work within the domain of sexual politics or film analysis to explore how masculine identity is formed, or how it interconnects with the social dynamics of power, class and imperialism.

Ironically we've come to a point where women and gay men are expected to talk about the politics of relationships and sexual identities, leaving the Boys to get on with the serious business of Class Struggle.

Of course this is a caricature of the issue, but the result of women and gays taking up the hornets' nest of sexual politics is that so-called 'straight' men have felt excluded from the debate, or been unable to deal with the issues which feminism has raised, or simply identified it as womens' work.

These two day events provide an opportunity for open discussion on sexual politics and the cinema and to look at the question of male gender in relation to wider social issues. 'Male Order' falls into two parts: the first session, held in London, aims to look at masculinity in relation to recent history, psychoanalysis and film; the second event, held a month later in Nottingham, centres on the representation of masculinity in relation to science fiction, independent film and gay politics.

Provisional Timetable

Saturday 19 March — Four Corners, 113 Roman Road, London E2 OHU. Tel: 01-981 4243.

10.30　Introduction by Kathy Myers
11.00　Masculinity in transition: the material roots of change — Andy Metcalf
12.00　The construction of male identity — Jane Graves
1.00　Lunch
2.15　Men as Spectacle: Masculinity in mainstream film — Steve Neale
3.15　Tea and discussion
4.30　Avant-garde film and primitive phantasies — Mike O'Pray

Saturday 23 April — The New Cinema, Midland Group, 24/32 Carlton Street, Nottingham NG1 1NN. Tel: 0602 582636

10.30　Introduction and summary of the discussion so far — by Mandy Merck
11.00　Boys of the Empire: Masculine Inperatives on Ruling Class Youth — Mick Eaton
12.00　Heroic fantasy in science fiction — Paul Hoch
1.00　Lunch
2.30　Independant film — screening and discussion
3.15　Screening of tapes by Ron Moule and Evan Morris
4.00　Tea and discussion chaired by Paul Willemen

Tickets: £4.00 (£2.50 unwaged) per event.
Apply to Hilary Dunn (Four Corners) or Steve Neale (Midland Group).

ORIENTATION

OLIVIER RICHON INTRODUCES HIS SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN ON BOMBAY FILM SETS

Since its birth, photography has been obsessed with language. Arago, presenting the new invention to the French Chamber of Deputies in 1839, claimed that the revolutionary process would first serve to render a faithful image of hieroglyphics; photography would be able to restitute their reality, 'contrary to the fictitious or purely invented signs' of drawing, painting, engraving. In other words, photography was conceived from the outset as a sort of visual Esperanto, as if reality could be translated into itself instantly: a seamless unity between sign and referent.

An opposite but modern scenario occurs with Mary Ellen Mark's attempt to document Bombay prostitutes (the modern equivalent to the Western fantasy of the harem): 'For ten years I tried to take photographs on Falkland Road and each time met with hostility and aggression. The women threw garbage and water and pinched me, crowds of men would gather around me.'[1] Needless to say, the orientalisation of the Orient becomes problematic when the Other returns the gaze of the Western onlooker; this threatens the very distance of the steady observation so crucial to the curious observers, those who want to know 'on sight'.

The Orient and the Occident are not just words but names, constructing identities which become territories. The Orient becomes what lies East of the dividing line. It is a differential term which defines what is not Western: it defines the West negatively, so that the Occident as a category cannot exist without the Orient. Inversely, the Orient only exists from a Western vantage point. Edward Said has stressed that the dichotomy Orient/Occident constructs an ontological distinction between West and East, 'Us' and 'Them'. He proposes to call

Orientalism those practices which deal with the Orient by 'making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it'.[2] What the orientalist posture elides is the position from where it speaks, for this position is taken for granted.

The series *Orientation* alludes to the Orientalist point of view; it isn't so much about the Orient as about the (Western) look which constitutes it. The photographs were taken on Bombay film sets. The film set, made solely for reproduction, becomes an emblem for the priority of reproduction over production generally, just as representation has priority over presentation.

Is this a kind of metalanguage or meta-image whose object would be film or photography? Yes, if one considers, after Barthes, all metalanguage as a form of irony. An image about an image means the opposite of what it pretends to show: if a photograph attempts to show to some extent the artifice of film as representation, it maintains nevertheless its own illusion and fascination as photograph; to refer to the construction of representation paradoxically increases the imaginary of the image. How could photography, a practice of manipulation and simulation, make visible the other simulation which film is anyway?

In the act of framing, one is always already framed by the apparatus one makes use of. This is the irony of imitation. Mimesis, the one who mocks and mimics, knows it very well.

[1] Mary Ellen Mark, *Falkland Road*, London, Thames and Hudson. 1981.
[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, pp 1-28.
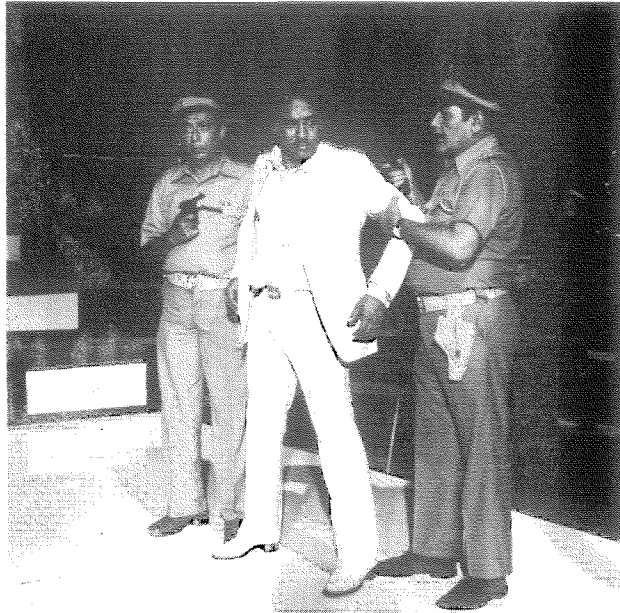
For Aristotle the despot was the father of
the family. He had absolute power over his
slaves but not over his wife and children.
In the eighteenth century the term despot
shifted from the domestic to the political
scene: it denounced the absolute power of
the Monarch who, like a father against nature,
confused his children – the people – with slaves.

Aristotle considered the Orient as the site of
true despotism as if it were tied to the
domestic, unable to rise to a political level.
He believed that the barbaric East would see the
light of Politics if it surrendered to the Greek
master who lived in the juste milieu and was
eventually called to dominate the world.
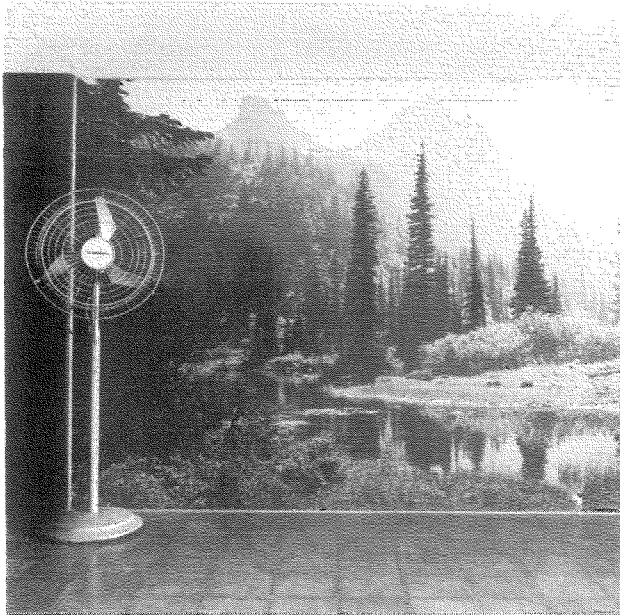
There were different scenes set up for morning
and evening, water in the form of lakes and rivers,
rocks covered with moss and toppled by temples.
Placed at the centre of the circular room,
spectators were offered a view of the totality.
Embracing successively its horizon, the eye
experienced a persisting mirage as long as the
borderline of the picture remained dissimulated.
Lacking movement, panoramas and the passion
they engendered slowly faded away.
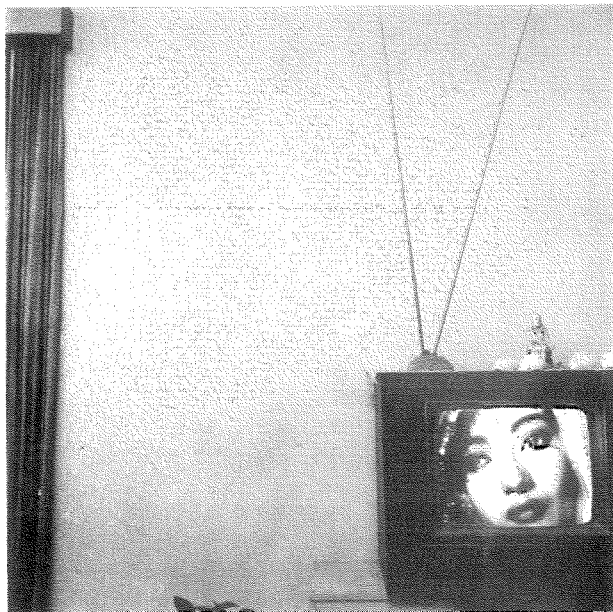
Nature became ordered in disorder offering
sensations of astonishment, even pain, danger
and terror. The light was carefully filtered
to produce change and introduce motion:
entire monuments collapsed into ruins under
the eyes of the spectators. Daguerre was advised
to choose historical scenes for his dioramas
to double the pleasure of the public who would
then willingly consent to be beguiled.
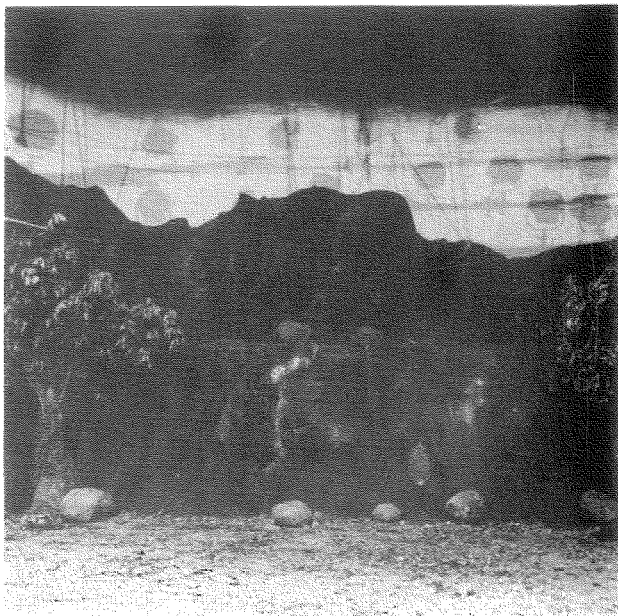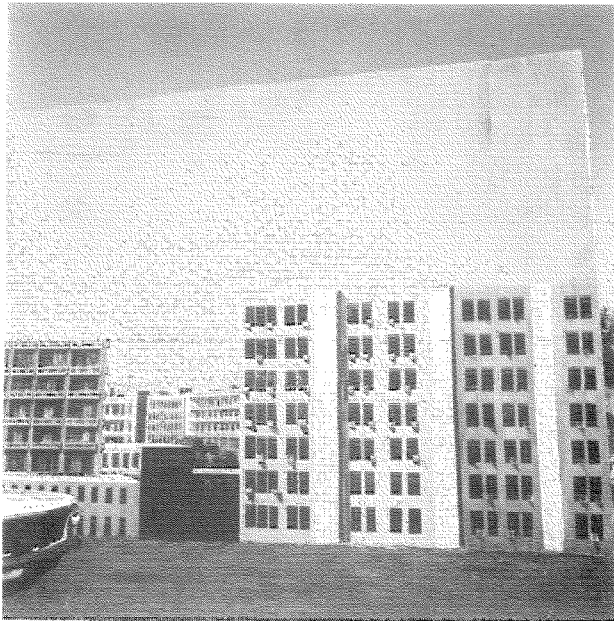
The look of the despot was at once
in the periphery and at the centre.
A look, which amongst all others,
was supposed to see them
as well as this unique gaze which,
from the centre of the Palace,
swept the town, the empire and the world.
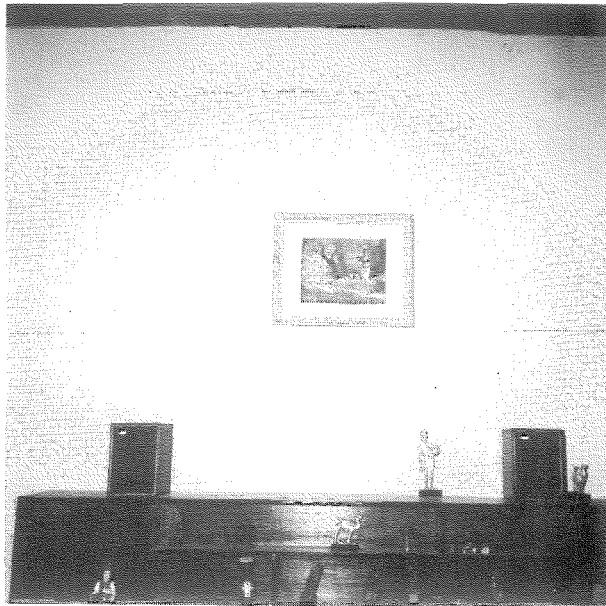
The master's voice resounded as
the look pronounced itself:
a sudden burst between two silences.
To make himself heard, it was even better
if the despot did not open his mouth at all.
Only one sharp glance sent with extreme gravity
would petrify them.

The Orient alternated between an old world
to which they returned, as to Eden or Paradise,
here to create a new version of the old,
and a wholly new place to which they came.
as Columbus came to America
in order to invent a new world.

They attempted to go and look
behind that which they thought to be
the vanishing point
from where it looked at them.
But it was ultimately themselves
and their world
that they rediscovered.

16 + Examinations in Media Studies .

Day Conference: Saturday 7 May
11.00 – 4.00 Leicester University School of Education

The 16+ Working Group is organising a day conference to discuss
and amend the draft national criteria for 16+ media studies. Everyone
concerned with media studies at this level is urged to attend and/or
send written amendments to the Draft Proposals to SEFT before
April 18.

If you wish to receive conference papers in advance write to SEFT
(16+ Day), 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL.

A SEFT EVENT

Mills & Boon:
Guilt without Sex
History with Frills:
'Costume' Fiction in
World War II
Brecht's Epic Form:
the Actor as Narrator
Redesigning the World:
Science Fiction and Fandom

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16 St John Street
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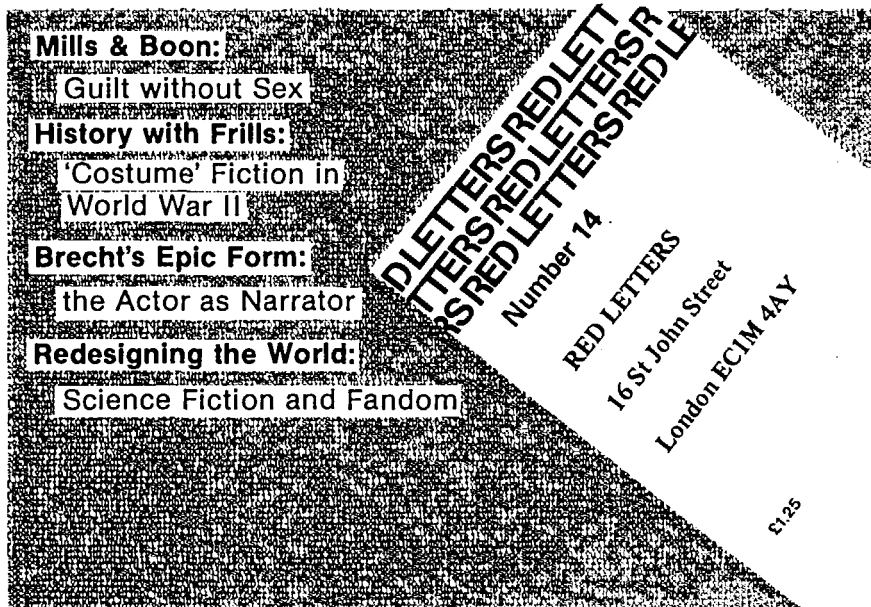
WHAT EVERY 16 YEAR OLD SHOULD KNOW ABUT THE MASS MEDIA

GEORGE FOSTER INTRODUCES THE PROPOSALS OF A WORKING PARTY CONVENED BY THE SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION IN FILM AND TELEVISION

At the end of their period of compulsory schooling, English and Welsh pupils aged 16+ usually face examinations organised either by local consortia of Universities, or by Regional Examination Boards. These exams are aimed at the 'top' 60% of the ability range of 16 year olds: the University system, called the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level (GCE 'O' Level) is aimed at the 'top' 20% of the ability range; the Regional Examination Boards validate a Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) which caters for those falling between the twentieth and sixtieth percentiles 'down'. The 'bottom' 40% of the ability range are not (in theory) catered for by the examination system at all. A top grade at CSE is accepted as the equivalent of a passing grade at 'O' level.

Because of the degree of independence until recently granted at a local level in the English and Welsh education systems, and the consequent regional identities of the Examination Boards, the *national* criteria in specific subjects have always been vague. The Boards have notionally comparable standards in each subject at each level, but in practice there have been notorious differences between them. The decentralised nature of the British education system has made questions of national standards difficult to pose.

Rationalisation of the whole system by having *one* Examination Board per region and one common standard for all 16+ pupils has been on the agenda for some time. Despite the recent Tory decision (May 1982) to postpone the introduction of the common system (known, for want of anything better, as 16+), this is clearly only a matter of time now. However, this does not imply the wholesale abandonment of the various GCE and CSE exams and syllabi that exist at the moment: the continuation of a degree

of independence granted to schools and colleges has meant that the proposed new boards will be expected to cope with a variety of courses and syllabi within any one subject area. In short, a large part of their function will be to validate courses already in existence or proposed to them at later dates. Subject panels were set up not to produce national syllabi but to set the national criteria under which local syllabi could be accepted, and therefore validated. What follows is therefore not a set of syllabus proposals, but a set of criteria which (hopefully) could be used to assess specific syllabus proposals in Media/Film and TV Studies. As might be expected, none of the subject panels set up to construct these national criteria had Media Studies within its brief: the English panel's report understandably expresses the view that Media Studies are of crucial importance, but too large an area for them to begin to deal with.

The British Film Institute's conference on Media Studies, held in November 1981,[1] was extremely concerned with the lack of consideration given by the new system to Media/ Film/TV Studies. All present exams in the subject area fall under the Mode 3 scheme.[2] Courses are accepted, moderated and validated by the Boards, but there is no general agreement as to which subject sub-committee of the present Boards should handle exams in Media Studies: different Boards use different subject panels. Since no national proposal was planned under the new system of 16+, there appeared to be a real danger of Media Studies slipping through the net. The BFI conference set up a working group which SEFT then convened, and the following proposals for national criteria are the result. They have not been solicited by, or sent to, any Examination Board.

There are numerous areas of debate and disagreement within the Media Studies field, but

[1] *Media Education Conference 1981, A Report*, British Film Institute Education Department, 1982.

[2] The exam boards have 3 modes of examination:
Mode 1 syllabi are externally set, examined and marked.
Mode 2 syllabi are set by schools and colleges but externally marked.
Mode 3 (a very common form) are set, examined and marked by the school or college but are externally moderated.

the following proposals are offered as a draft for development. We welcome comment on them, and intend that they be discussed at a conference to be held in Leicester on May 7 1983. The draft emerging from that conference will be formally submitted to the Examination Boards as a proposal for National Criteria.

16 + Media Studies Final Draft Proposals

AIM: To enable candidates to analyse examples of media products in detail, to describe in outline the technologies and job roles used to produce these, the ownership and financing of media production and the circulation of media products to audiences, and to explain the importance of social contexts upon an audience's reception and consumption of media products.
ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES: By the time they complete a 16+ course in Media Studies students should be able to:

1. identify the processes of media production, describing in broad terms the professional and technical practices involved (the organisation, selection and recording of material for a television or radio programme, the production of a film, the gathering, selection, layout and printing of material in a newspaper).

2. demonstrate through the analysis of particular media products an understanding of the main forms and conventions the media use in selecting or combining words, music, sounds and images to produce meanings.

3. describe and explain how individuals, social groups and events are depicted in media products, how audiences may receive and understand these representations and how their understanding may influence attitudes and behaviour.

4. describe the dominant patterns of ownership and control of the different media and compare and contrast commercially operated and publically financed media, outlining ways in which such patterns of ownership and control influence media production. Candidates should also be able to outline actual or possible alternative models of media organisation.
CONTENT: It is neither possible nor valuable to define a comprehensive 'body of knowledge' which might constitute the content of Media Studies. This is because any such knowledge is in the process of constant change and such a listing would therefore rapidly date. More

importantly, it is to be hoped that any criteria established for Media Studies at 16+ could take account of much of the range of existing examinations in this subject field. At present some courses concentrate upon a single medium (for instance, Film Studies). Arguments about what might constitute the subject content for courses involve difficult issues of 'breadth' – a number of media – versus 'depth' – learning concepts through concentration upon a single medium or a limited number. Equally the present Mode 3 system at 16+ is intended to enable schools and colleges to construct courses which take account of their facilities (the availability, for example, of a television studio) and of the particular interests and expertise of staff. For these reasons it would be a mistake to seek to impose any rigid 'body of knowledge' upon every course.

However the stated aims and objectives should be seen as establishing very clearly the approaches any course would be expected to adopt towards its chosen area or aspect of media. Thus a course intended solely to develop practical production skills in media would not fall within the proposed criteria. Equally a course concentrating simply upon the description and appreciation of media 'texts' (films, newspapers, television programmes or whatever), on a parallel to the study of literary texts would also be excluded by these criteria, even though much of the work of any course is likely to consist of the study of such media 'texts'.

Definitions of the Media are notoriously slippery. Any course of Media Studies would involve the study of aspects of one or more of the following different media. Each presents either visual, aural and graphic information, recorded or transmitted through photochemical, electromagnetic or printed means and made available to large audiences through broadcasting, multiple copying and widespread distribution: Films, Magazines and Newspapers, Popular Fiction, Popular Music, Photography, Radio, Television. It is crucial that the above be studied in relation to the appropriate social institutions – Cinema, the Press etc. Courses constructed on particular practices common to several media, such as Advertising, or News, or study of aspects of media such as the representation of women or ethnic groups would be acceptable.

CORE CONCEPTS: The fundamental similarity between courses in Media Studies consists not of particular factual content but of concentration upon certain 'core concepts' relating to the aims and assessment objectives. These are as set out below, with possible examples from different media as illustrations of what is intended in terms of level of knowledge and understanding:

FORMS: This could include broad types used to define media products, and the overall characteristics of such types: *Newspapers* – daily, local, weekly, 'popular', 'quality' together with the typical formal divisions of their content such as editorial, letters, home news, foreign news, human interest, financial, sports, leisure etc; *Radio* – public service, commercial, national, local, programmes, continuity, together with characteristic broadcasts such as news bulletins, magazine programmes, quizzes, relays of sporting events, current affairs, disc jockey music programmes, plays, situation comedies etc; *Films* – feature films, documentaries, shorts, animated films, newsreels, together with broad categories such as narrative, realist/anti-realist, independent film and different genres of mainstream cinema.

CONVENTIONS: This would include both the conventions governing the ways in which content is represented through the formal means of any particular medium and the conventions of representing individuals, groups and events operated across the media. The former might include the layout, size of headline and use of photograph in a newspaper, choice of camera angle and framing in any photograph, the style of presentation and choice of running order in a television news bulletin, the length of tracks and type of instrumentation on a record; the latter would include such elements as the use of costumes, settings and accents to construct the social identity of fictional characters in films or television plays, the selection of people to be interviewed and to make comments on radio, television or newspapers, the kinds of questions asked of them and the attitude adopted by the interviewer.

MEDIATION: This would involve examining the ways in which the media through their choice of forms and conventions do not simply mirror or relay any pre-existent social reality but inevitably construct versions of supposed social reality which have an active part in influencing

attitudes and behaviour (for example, the manner in which women are represented within advertisements, magazine articles and fiction films and plays; the presentation of images and explanations of Third World countries through the media; the documentary reporting, current affairs discussion and television dramatisation of issues of 'law and order').

TECHNOLOGY: This would include the technical means by which different media record, reproduce or relay information, the possible characteristics of each medium as it has been developed and used, and the possible alternative ways in which such technology might be used (differences between broadcast television, video-recording and cable-television, use of video editing, colour separation overlay, Quantel, ENG, possibilities of local cable operation, of broadcasting portable video recordings; technology of multi-track recording, use of synthesisers and record pressing; development and use of colour, sound, widescreen, different filmstocks, animation and special effects within the cinema).

PRODUCTION: This would cover in outline the various stages through which any media product would go from inception to the form in which it is presented to audiences, together with the division of labour into various specialist roles which characterises media production (the roles of journalists, special reporters, sub-editors, section editors and production manager on a newspaper, together with the printing jobs involved; the role of producer, script editor, writers, designers, directors and cast in a television drama series).

FINANCE: This would be concerned with the sources and amount of finance typically involved in a media product, the raising and recoupment of finance, marketing, associated products, and the manner in which such financial considerations influence the production. It would also involve consideration of finance through licence, through advertising revenue and through direct subscription (sources of finance_ for film production, cost of film distribution and exhibition, amount of money spent on advertising, cost of tickets and likely audience size, sales to television and video-hire, commercial radio franchises, costs of equipment, advertising income, costs of production, agreements on 'needle time').

CIRCULATION: This would explore the dissemination of media products via broadcasting, physical distribution and sales, hire, payment for admission etc. It would also be concerned with the ways in which audiences are constructed and with the manner in which media products draw upon meanings previously produced by other media products and incorporate these as likely 'points of sale'. (Examples of this would include awareness of broadcast, satellite and cable television systems as means of circulating products differently, together with the impact of video recording, and the effects of the latter on cinema exhibition, or the differing circulations of local and national radio. Examples of the 'circulation of ideas' might include the construction of celebrities across newspapers, magazines, radio and television: thus a person noted for a particular achievement, for example in sports, may be used first to attract audiences, then as an element in advertisements, then as a 'personality' in, say, television quiz shows.)

CONSUMPTION: This would be linked to Finance and Audience in stressing both the commercial basis on which most media products are predicated and the consequent linking of these to leisure pursuits and 'entertainment'. It would consider the marketing of products and media-related 'hardware' such as cassette radios, video recorders, cameras, and sound systems, and the possible relationship between media products and the purchasing power of different sections of the public. With Audience it would study the possible sociological effects on behaviour and 'lifestyle'.

AUDIENCE: This would consider the construction of audiences and the varying reception of media products which may result from the social composition and context of different audiences. It would examine the differences of location (cinema versus home viewing, live concert/disco versus record played individually) and the 'social uses' associated with different media (cinema as a place for young adults to go 'away from home'). This aspect of the study of media would also consider the ways in which media products 'address' audiences, that is offer them both representations of themselves and accounts of how they might understand the world.

PRACTICAL WORK: It is essential that any

course of Media Studies should contain a practical element. By this we do not mean solely the production of media by students, but also a number of other possible activities. These would include simulations and photoplays (the compiling on paper of a possible television news broadcast based upon an examination of a morning's newspapers); exercises involving media equipment (students recording a prepared radio script on audio-tape or putting together existing slides against different music at different rhythms to explore the resultant effects), scripting and storyboarding; as well as actual media production in such media as video, audio-tape, photography and print, film, tape-and-slide, poster.

Stress should be placed upon this practical work for two main reasons: since many of the media rely not solely on written words but on speech, sounds and images, it is important for students to explore the ways in which the juxtaposition and combination of these may construct meanings. Also such activity, conducted in groups, will be both a very necessary stimulus to learning and a means of insight into the group situations in which most media products are actually produced.

Relationship between Assessment Objectives and Content

In any syllabus entitled 'Media Studies' the element of practical work should comprise at least 20% and not more than 50% of the total mark. Such a syllabus should include a clear indication as to which media or aspects of media it proposes for study and how the proposed study will incorporate core concepts sufficient to enable students to meet the stated Assessment Objectives.

The assessment of Media Studies should be concerned less with the recall of specific factual knowledge and more with the ability to apply the core concepts to the media products which students experience in their daily lives. It is important to assess students' awareness and understanding of these concepts rather than their abilities at written English. Any course should therefore be assessed by more methods than Final Examination.

PRACTICAL WORK:

1. Practical work may be by individuals or by a group. In both cases there should be brief

written accounts of the individual student's involvement, either in the form of a diary or a comment after the practical work is finished. In any group work the contribution of individuals must be clearly identifiable.

2. Assessment of practical work should include an element for the display of practical skills and presentation, but also an element for the stated intentions and analytic approach adopted by the student.

3. Agreement will have to be made with a moderator as to which technical aspects students are expected to control and which are reasonably under the supervision of a teacher or technician (students might or might not, for example, be responsible for setting sound levels in a TV or radio studio, or for developing photographic negatives).

PROJECT WORK: Project Work may be desirable but it should be optional to any syllabus. Where project work is offered it should include the possibility of using audio and visual means of presentation as well as written work.

ORAL EXAMINATION: Since much work on any Media Studies course should involve group discussion and analysis of media products, it is highly desirable for examinations to include an oral element. We would see this as including each student's presentation of a topic with illustrations, together with participation in group discussion of others' presentations.

OTHER COURSE WORK: This could include both extended essays and also shorter analyses of such items as a magazine cover, a record sleeve, two newspaper accounts of the same incident, an advertisement etc. Any course work requirement should be set at a realistic level, which would not be likely to be more than the equivalent of ten essays of 350-500 words.

FINAL EXAMINATION: It is not essential for courses to have a final examination. Where such an examination is included as a method, it should not be based on memory of facts but on the response of students to stimuli provided as part of the exam (for example, analysis of visual or print or aural material shown or played to students in the exam). Where any course includes a body of technical knowledge as part of its content, it is appropriate to examine this by such techniques as multiple choice questions, single sentence answers or by the labelling of diagrams.